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ABSTRACT

A study describes a program for improving the quality and variety of students' writing. The targetud population consisted of elementary and special education high school students in suburban communities north of Chicago, Illinois. The problems were documented through the collection of writing samples, teacher observation, student self-evaluation, and attitudinal surveys. Analysis of the probable causes was supported by the data collected by student and parent surveys. Changing populations, changing educational attitudes, absenteeism, leisure time pursuits, and a lack of instructional time in previous writing experiences all contributed to the problem. A review of solution possibilities suggested by the professional literature resulted in the selection of a writer's workshop model for writing instruction. The model included lessons on writing skills, peer conferencing, free writing opportunities, and the publishing of writing products. Post intervention data indicated an increase in the quality and variety in children's writing. (Contains 29 references and 20 figures of data. Appendices present writing prompts, survey instruments, record forms, sample reading materials, and the post intervention writing prompt.) (Author/RS)

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ED 395 595

IMPROVING STUDENTS' ABILITY TO PRODUCE QUALITY AND VARIETY IN WRITTEN LANGUAGE

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Master's Program

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Abstract

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DATE: May, 1996

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ABSTRACT: This report described a program for improving the quality and variety of students' writing. The targeted population consisted of elementary and special education high school students, in suburban communities north of Chicago. The problems were documented through the collection of writing samples, teacher observation, student self-evaluation, and attitudinal surveys.

Analysis of the probable causes was supported by the data collected by the student and parent surveys. Changing populations, changing educational attitudes, absenteeism, leisure time pursuits, lack of instructional time in previous writing experiences, all contributed to the problem.

A review of solution possibilities suggested by the professional literature resulted in the selection of a Writer's Workshop Model for writing instruction. This model included lessons on writing skills, peer conferencing, free writing opportunities, and the publishing of writing products.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in the quality and variety in children's writing.

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

The students in the targeted classrooms lack quality and variety in their written language. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes local and standardized assessments and formal writing samples.

Immediate Problem Context - School A

The school district is comprised of two schools: one is an elementary school that consists of 527 students - kindergarten through fifth grade and one is a middle school with a population of 284 students in sixth through eighth grades. The target elementary school is ethnically mixed, with 71.5 percent White, 22 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.4 percent Hispanic, and 2.1 percent Black. The attendance rate is 96 percent daily, with no truancy. Economically, about three percent of the students are considered low income. The community is changing and currently the school population is undergoing a rise in limited English speaking students to a level of 12 percent of the total student population (Annual State Report, 1994).

The elementary school staff consists of 25 classroom teachers, one full-time social worker, one part-time psychologist, two academic support teachers, two physical education teachers, one music, one art, one learning media

teacher, one computer teacher, one speech/language clinician, one English as a Second Language teacher, and one part-time teacher for the gifted. Additional support staff includes one science coordinator and one language arts coordinator/assistant principal, as well as the building principal (Annual State Report, 1994).

The target school follows a regular elementary educational program, with the core curriculum taught within the self-contained classroom. Fine arts and additional programs are taught by specialists. Average teacher experience is approximately 13 years, with about 35 percent of the staff holding bachelor degrees and 65 percent holding post-graduate degrees. The average teacher salary is $45, 137 and average administrative salary is $78, 369 (Annual Report, 1994).

Currently, there is some concern from parents regarding the whole language approach in reading, writing, and spelling. The high expectations of the parents require early mastery of language skills. The constant influx during the year of limited English learners has raised the anxiety level.

The Surrounding Community - Community A

The school district is located in an affluent suburban area north of Chicago. The median age of the residents is 37.5 years of age and the average income is about $84,000. Approximately two percent of the population is considered below poverty level. The education level of the residents is high, with 33 percent of adults having bachelor degrees and 18 percent attaining post-graduate degrees. (U.S. Census, 1990).

The community's population is ethnically mixed, with 91.2 percent White, seven percent Asian and Pacific Islanders, six percent Black and about 2.5

percent Hispanic. (U.S. Census, 1990). Currently the school population is undergoing a rise in limited English speaking students, to a level of 12 percent of the total student population (Annual School Report, 1994).

There is broad support, as well as high expectations, for this school within the community. Most parents are well informed about education in general and the school program specifically. These expectations also come from the corporations that are headquartered within the district's boundaries. Several corporations contribute to programs designed within the district.

The school district is headed by a seven member Board of Education. A superintendent, curriculum director, and business manager are responsible for carrying out their directives.

Immediate Problem Context - School B

This high school, part of a unit school district, is situated in a North Shore Community of Chicago. The total student population of the high school is 2,873. The ethnic characteristics of this population are as follows:

Hispanics	36 percent
African Americans	30 percent
Caucasians	30 percent
Asians	2 percent
American Indians	1.4 percent
Eskimos	.06 percent

Information from the current School State Report Card indicates that twenty-eight percent of the student population come from low-income families. These families and students are grouped as follows: receiving public aid, living in

institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches.

Limited-English-Proficient students make up six percent of the students. This number includes those who have been found to be eligible for bilingual education. The dropout rate is based on the number of students in grades 9-12. The graduation rate of this high school is 77 percent.

The attendance rate is 92.5 percent and student mobility is 40.5 percent. That number is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave a school during the school year. The possibility exists that students may be counted in more than one group.

Chronic truants are students who are absent from school without valid cause for ten percent or more of the last 180 school days. These students account for four percent of the school population. The average class size for this high school is 25 students. However, for special education students, the maximum class size is ten.

The total number of staff members at this high school is 210. The average teaching experience is 14 years and teachers with advanced degrees make up about 56 percent of the teaching staff (School Report Card, 1994).

The high school offers college preparatory classes, special education classes, opportunities for vocational education, as well as many options for elective course work in all areas. While the high school serves the typical general school population, it also includes classes for all areas of identified special education. Though these classes are interspersed throughout the building, the special education students still remain isolated and protected in a self-contained environment. The result of this design has limited the exposure

of these students to some of the new trends in teaching strategies. Most of what they are taught is through a traditional teaching style.

The community combined its two high schools into one because the administration felt that removing the asbestos from the older of the two high schools was too costly. A poorly designed addition was added to the newer school and close to 3,000 students attend. Passing period time had to be extended to six minutes to allow for the students to get from one end of the building to the other, thereby shortening each class period.

The Surrounding Community - Community B

The community is approximately 34 square miles, and is home to 75,000 people. It is the ninth largest city in Illinois. Homes are available from starter homes of $50,000 to dream homes in the $600,000 range. The median family income is projected at $39,312. The community is well serviced by the Regional Transit Authority's commuter rail line - the Chicago and Northwestern, by the PACE bus lines, and the Greyhound bus.

The median age of the adult population in this community is 30.3 years. The work force consists of 24 percent professionals and approximately 35 percent of the work force are involved in service or labor related occupations (U.S. Bureau Census, 1990).

There are many community resources dedicated to cultural enrichment. The city has a public library, a park district, a historical society and museum, a symphony orchestra, and a renovated water front. Opportunities for further education exist within the community. There is a small private college located within the city and a community junior college near by (Illinois Department, 1994).

The unit school district is administered by a seven member Board of Education and one superintendent. The high school has one principal and two assistant principals, as well as nine guidance counselors, two psychologists, two social workers, one drug counselor and two prenatal counselors.

Immediate Problem Context - School C

The targeted center is in a North Shore community of Chicago. The center is a day care facility for children three to five years old, a nursery school for four year olds and the Kindergarten Enrichment Program which is considered part of the day care program. The student population of the day care center is 108 students. The ethnic characteristics of the day care center's population are as follows:

Hispanics	61 students
White	34 students
African Americans	8 students
Asian	5 students

There are 16 staff members in this center. The average teaching experience is 13 years and 5 teachers have advanced degrees (Staff Qualifications Center Profile). Many teachers have been teaching at this center for more than 20 years. Salary varies with education and years of experience. The average salary for this center is $17,000 per year.

The licensing agencies for the center are the Department of Family Services (D.C.F.S.) and the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. There is a Board of Directors that consists of 24 parents who volunteer to be part of the board. These members are the main source of direction for running the center. There is also a director who manages, supports and facilitates the

work of the teachers and parents. There is one accountant and one secretary who assists the director in the day to day administrative functions.

Day care tuition is $24.00 a day. Tuition may be less, due to Title XX qualifications. Title XX funds are Federal Funds administered by the state. Family size and income determines eligibility for this public aid service. Families who qualify for Title XX pay a minimum amount of five cents a day. The school is funded by a variety of programs. They are the following: Human Relations Commission Funds, Cultural Arts Commission Funds, Rotary Club Funds, Federal Food Program, Board fund-raising, School-Age Child Care Scholarship, Township Funds and The United Way. The number of low-income families is 52. One family in the Day Care Center receives total public aid. Twenty-two students or 17% have limited English proficiency.

The Surrounding Community - Community C

The community is located 21 miles north of downtown Chicago, along the shore of Lake Michigan. It is one of the eight Chicago suburban communities referred to as "the North Shore". This community is located in Lake County, the third most populous county in Illinois (The City of Highland Park Community Profile).

The population of this city is 30,575. The median age is 38 years. The public school system sends 85-90% of its graduates to college. The majority of the community's adults, 53% hold bachelor's or advanced degrees.

The racial and ethnic groups of this community are as follows: Over 90% of the residents are White, 4% Hispanic, 2% African Americans and 2% Asian / Pacific Islanders.

The median income for the households in this community is $71,905 (1990 U.S. Census). Most adults work in Cook County, however, about 42% work in Lake County. Residents are employed in various occupations. The majority work in areas of executive or managerial positions or professional specialities.

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, 80% of the homes in this community are owner occupied. The median home value is $257,000 and the median rent is $696 per month. The median home value in this community is higher than the median county wide home value.

Although the center is located in the city described above, many of the students live in a nearby town. The number of students who live in the above community is 60 and the number who live in the nearby community is 48. The total population for this nearby community is only 5,331. The median age is 31.5 years. The racial and ethnic groups for this community are as follows:

White	3,749 people
Hispanic Origin	1,261 people
African American	239 people
Asian / Pacific Islanders	82 people

The number of people in this community who speak primarily English is 3,137 and 1,060 people speak Spanish as their native language with English as a second language. There are 746 people who speak other languages and some English. The percent of high school graduates (or higher) is 63%. The percentage of people who received a bachelor's degree (or higher) is 22%.

The median income for the households in this community is $32,854 (1990 Census of Population and Housing). The occupations that are held in this community are:

Managerial and Professional specialty occupations	617 people
Technical, sales and administrative support	667 people
Service occupations	374 people
Farming, forestry and fishing occupations	128 people
Precision, production, craft and repair occupations	275 people
Operators, fabricators and laborers	482 people

The total number of occupied units in this community is 2,015. There are 661 owner occupied units and 1,354 rental units. The number of people who fall below the poverty level in this particular community is 471.

Regional and National Context of Problem

Experienced classroom teachers have noticed the gradual decline of children's writing, both in personal and academic areas. Many children lack motivation, as well as competency in skills, to make themselves understood. Students do not seem to take ownership of their written work, but do appear more interested in simply completing an assignment. The concept of writing a personally evocative, meaningful communication appears to lack value for the writer (Fletcher, 1993).

Teachers observe frustration in many children as they write. This frustration has been seen in classrooms throughout the U.S.. The problem is pervasive, as evidenced by the low performance on standardized writing tests. Educational reforms are being instituted on the national and state levels, in an attempt to improve the quality and quantity of students' writing. Educators and

some of the experts are finding that the solutions are very definitely becoming part of the problem (Freedman, 1995).

In every classroom, there are children who do not understand the writing process, and who waste valuable time using avoidance techniques when it is time to write. They lack motivation or understanding to complete a writing task. These students are easy to target within the classroom: their output is low and their assignments are often messy and incomplete. They simply do not know what to do (Graves, 1991).

Educators of today's children have a monumental task to achieve. It is paramount that teachers prepare students to be active participants in society. Helping students become comfortable, proficient writers is what educators need to do to help children appreciate and enjoy writing.

Lately, there have been questions voiced from the community regarding spelling and writing development. Parents are concerned about children's mastery of spelling and writing conventions. With the influx of limited English speaking students, parents are concerned that the native English speakers may not receive the challenge or assistance needed to be successful writers.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

Two means were used to document the baseline writing level of the targeted students. A writing prompt (Appendix A) was administered to all students during the first month of the school year. The students were given approximately 15 minutes to respond to the prompt. The prompts were evaluated and scored using the rubrics developed by the teachers (Appendix B).

In addition to the prompt, a student attitudinal survey (Appendix C) about writing was administered. The survey was given during the same month as the baseline prompt.

In the the graphs shown on the subsequent pages, the following questions were used and remain constant for the pre-intervention evaluation of a writer. Question 1 was determined not appropriate to be used at this time with the baseline writing prompt (Appendix A) because the topic was predetermined.

2. Does the writer use detail?
3. Does the writer use conventions?
4. Does the writer have a focus?
5. Does the writer organize and have a beginning, a middle and an end ?
6. Does the writer use expressive vocabulary?

6. Does the writer use expressive vocabulary?
7. Does the writer use the writing process appropriately?

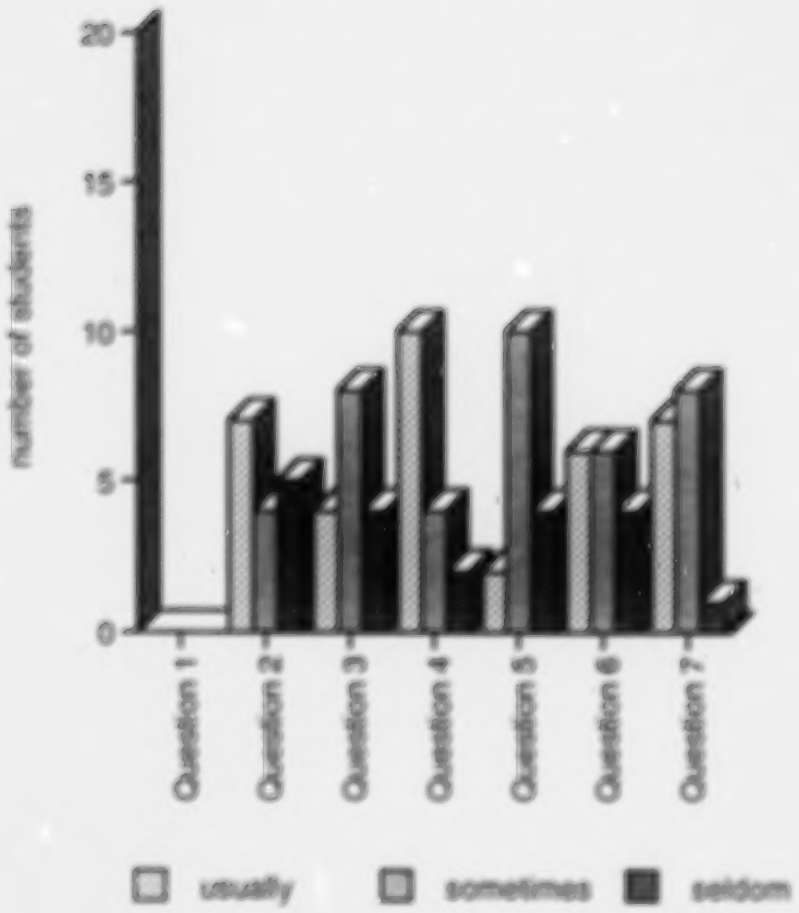

Figure 1

Evaluation of a Writer - Kindergarten

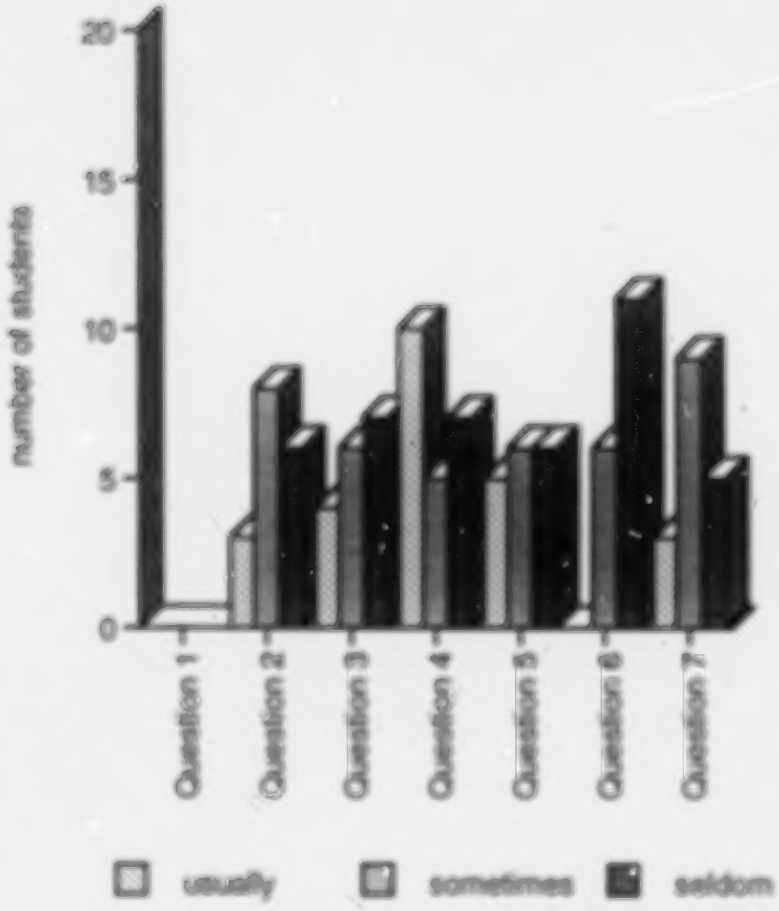

Figure 2

Evaluation of a Writer - Second Grade

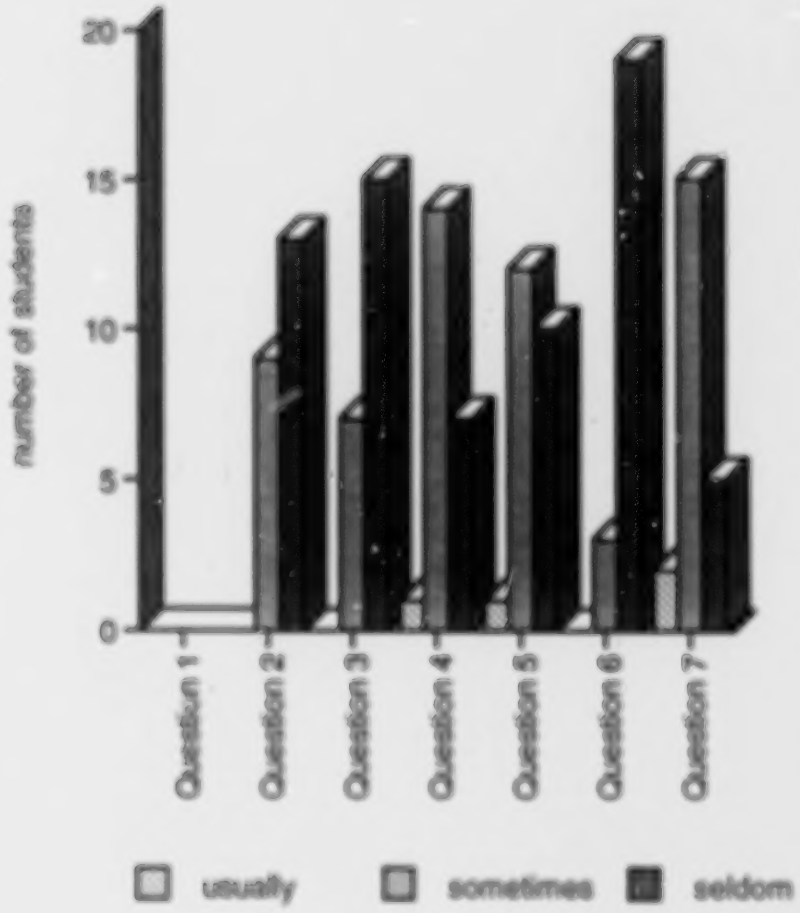

Figure 3

Evaluation of a Writer - Fourth Grade

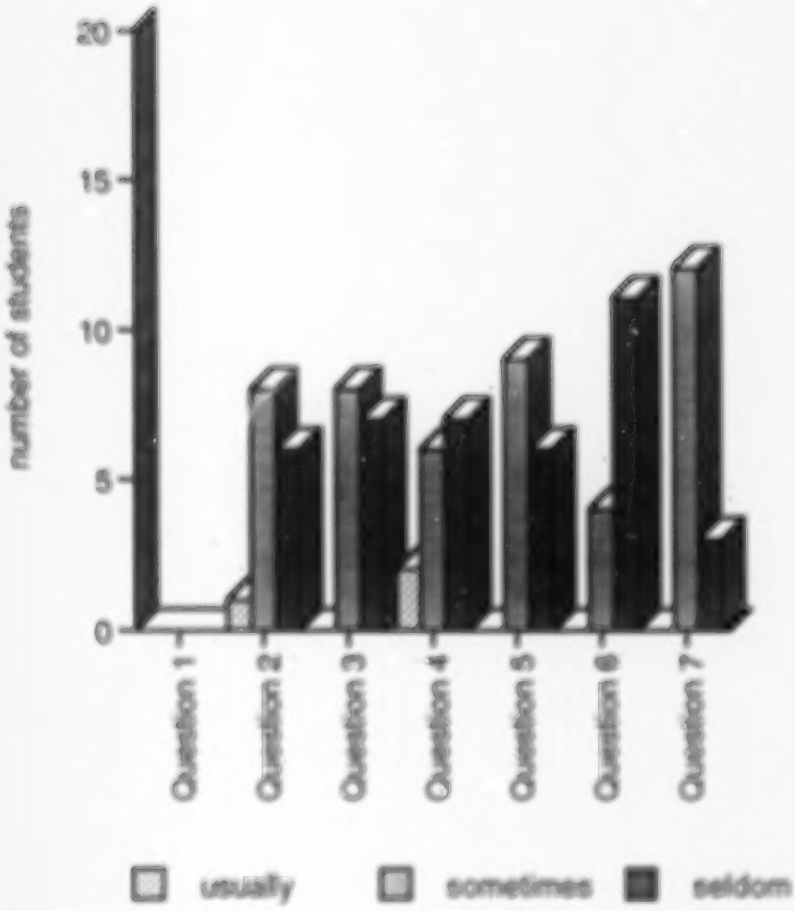

Figure 4

Evaluation of a Writer - Special Education High School

In response to the writing prompt (Figure 1) the kindergarten children were asked to draw a picture about something they remembered. They dictated the event to the teacher who wrote their exact words for the prompt.

The graphic display of the data shows that the use of detail appears to be strong at this level. Children described their chosen event clearly and maintained their focus. These two areas appear to be strengths for the children at this time.

Weaker areas identified in the graph, Figure I, are the use of the writing conventions and organization of ideas. These apparent weaknesses may be due to current developmental stages or lack of writing experiences (Marling, C. & Rhodes, L.,1988). Another area of demonstrated need is the infrequent use of descriptive vocabulary. This particular group has a large percentage of English as a Second Language (ESL) students, which may influence vocabulary development, as shown in Figure 1. It should be stated at this point that all communication for this research project, has been done in English.

In second grade, the targeted students continue to show strength in their ability to maintain their focus on a subject. The graph in Figure 2, shows these children demonstrate an increased ability from the kindergarten subjects to organize ideas and events. This could be due to developmental factors or increased experiences with the writing process. This targeted population contains only one ESL student with strong English proficiency.

The areas of lower performance are the use of appropriate writing conventions such as punctuation and grammatical constructions. Poor spelling at this time is considered developmental, but will be expected to move toward conventional spelling through the course of instruction. Another identified area of low performance is the ability to use a broader variety of vocabulary.

The targeted fourth grade is comprised of a large population of students where a different language is spoken at home. Three students in this class receive ESL services daily. It is felt that this situation influences the results shown in Figure 3. Analysis of this figure demonstrates that a major weakness is the lack of organization. The children tend to write without clear sequencing of events, which affects their focus. Lack of detail and lack of use of expressive vocabulary is common with this age group. The children may restrict their use of vocabulary due to their concern over spelling errors. These children often use words they are comfortable spelling, so they minimize the revision and editing process.

The high school special education group is an EMH (educable mentally handicapped) classroom. The students are relatively low functioning and their exposure to the writing process probably has been very minimal, which is evidenced in Figure 4. The graph in Figure 4, also demonstrates several apparent weaknesses. The students were unable to stay focused on the topic chosen, therefore, the product lacked organization.

Most of these students have limited exposure to expressive vocabulary and complex thoughts. Point of fact, four of these students receive speech service specific for expanding vocabulary usage. The data in Figure 4 shows lack of vocabulary use which affects the use of detail in writing. It is quite possible, that the students' low cognitive ability, combined with the lack of experiences and fear of failure, produce this type of writer.

In the graphs shown on the subsequent pages, the following questions were asked and remain constant for the discussion of the pre-intervention student questionnaire:

1. Do you like to write?
2. Do you like to write with someone?
3. Do you like to illustrate your writing?
4. Do you like to share what you write about yourself?
5. Do you like to write about yourself?
6. Do you like to listen to others when they share their stories?
7. Do you like to write at home?
8. What do you write at home?

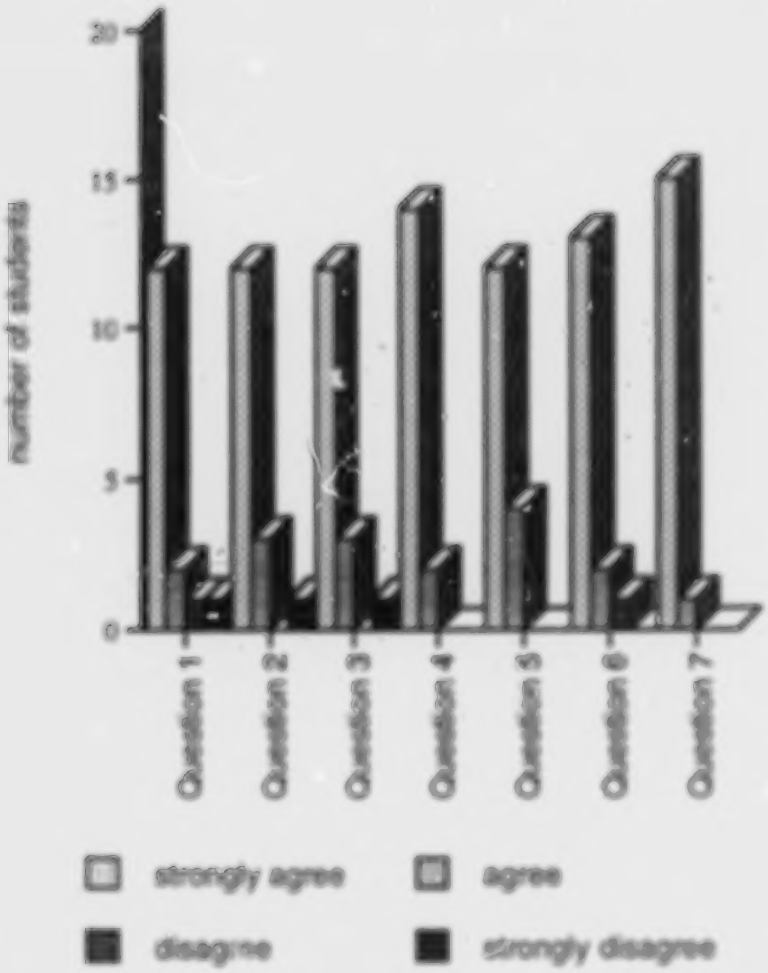

Figure 5

Student Questionnaire - Kindergarten

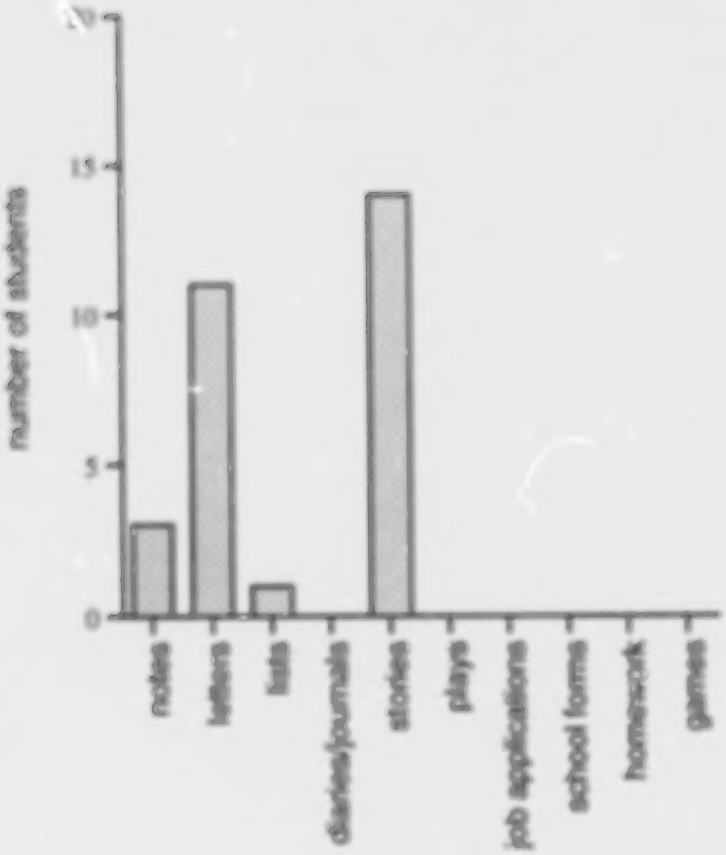

Figure 5b

Question 8 - Kindergarten

The majority of Kindergarten students enjoy expressing themselves on paper and dictating words to describe their illustrations (Figure 5). Most children enjoy involving peers in this process. Kindergartners enjoy writing and talking about themselves at this personal developmental stage. Unlike many older students, Kindergarten children enjoy telling and listening to personal experiences. All these children like to write at home in a risk free environment. As indicated in Figure 5b, most children write stories and letters at home. Some students reported they use notes and letters as forms of written communication.

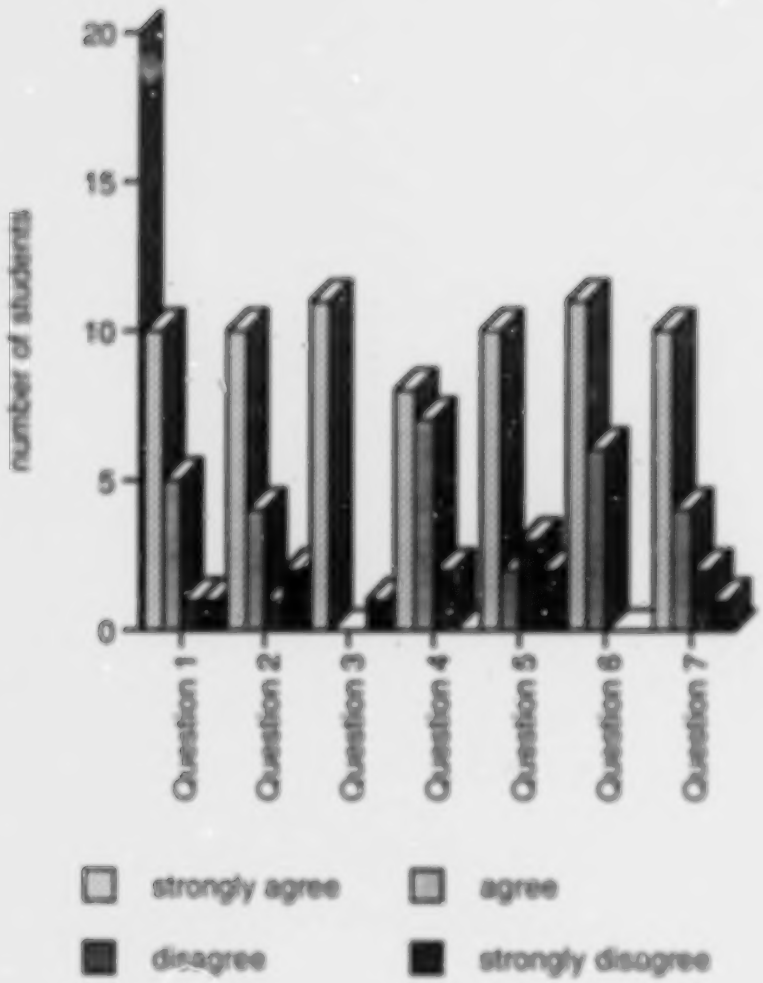

Figure 6

Student Questionnaire - Second Grade

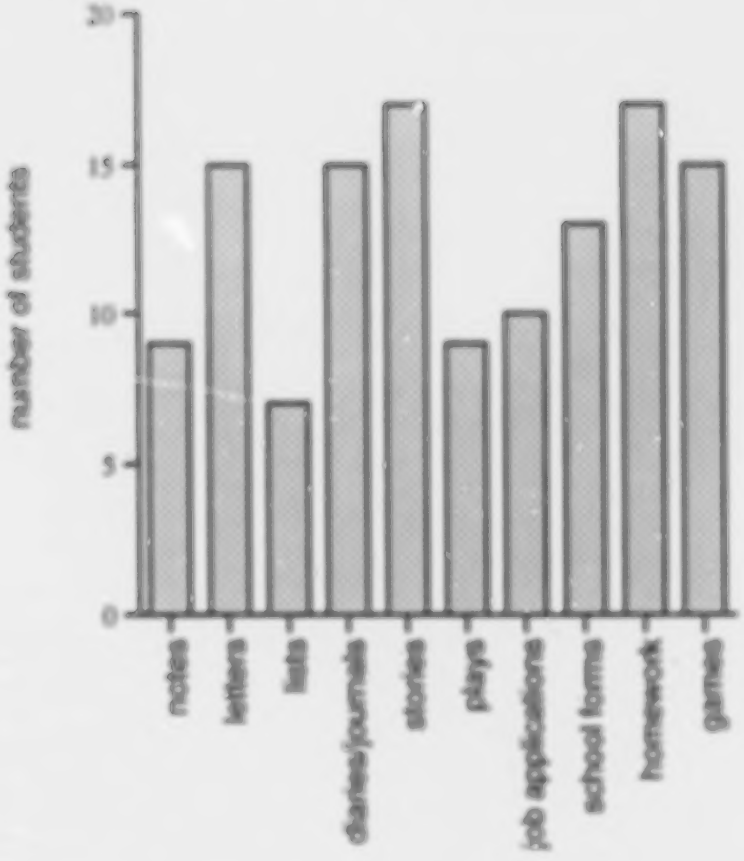

Figure 6b

Question 8 - Second Grade

Second graders in the targeted classroom showed a generally favorable attitude toward writing (Figure 6). At this school, a whole language approach, with strong emphasis on developmental philosophy, has made most children feel competent and valued as writers. They particularly enjoy being able to use drawings, either as organizational aids or interest grabbers. Listening to their own stories and the stories of others gained much favor as well.

Surprisingly, several children expressed little interest in writing about themselves and sharing what they write on this topic. Perhaps they think they are not interesting enough, compared to Power Rangers.

There are several children in the classroom experiencing difficulty with written language and their attitude is reflected in the graph. Currently these difficulties are being addressed in the classroom. Writing experiences at home are frequent and varied in content and purpose. Although there is indication that many students participate in filling out job applications and school forms, there is considerable question regarding the validity of this statistic.

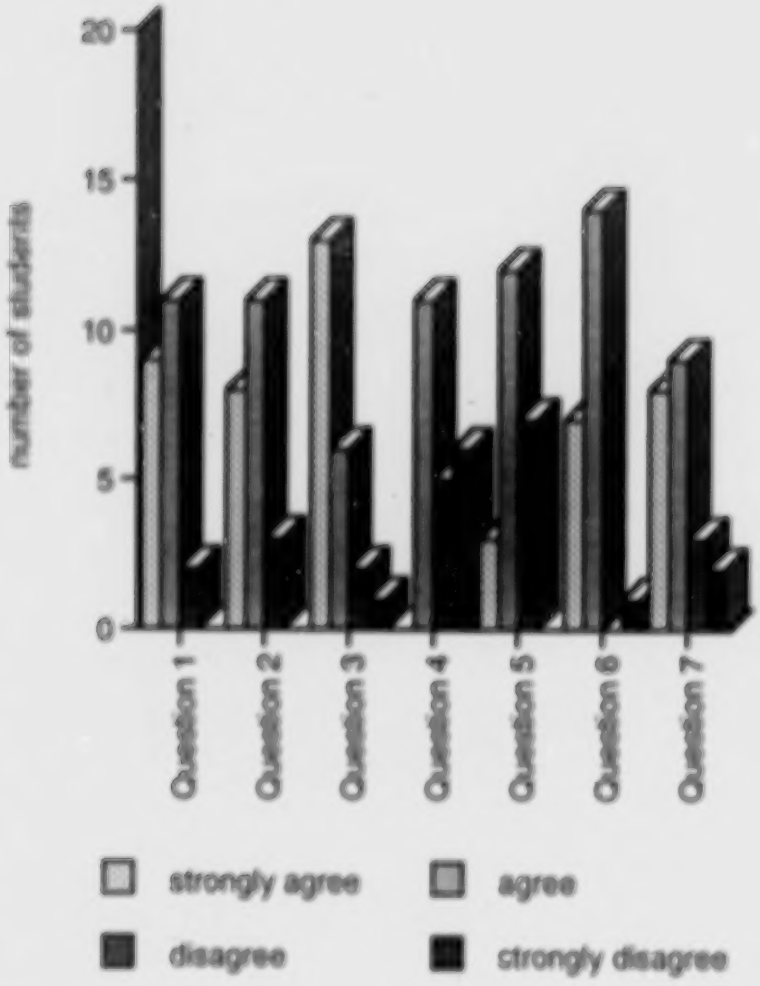

Figure 7

Student Questionnaire - Fourth Grade

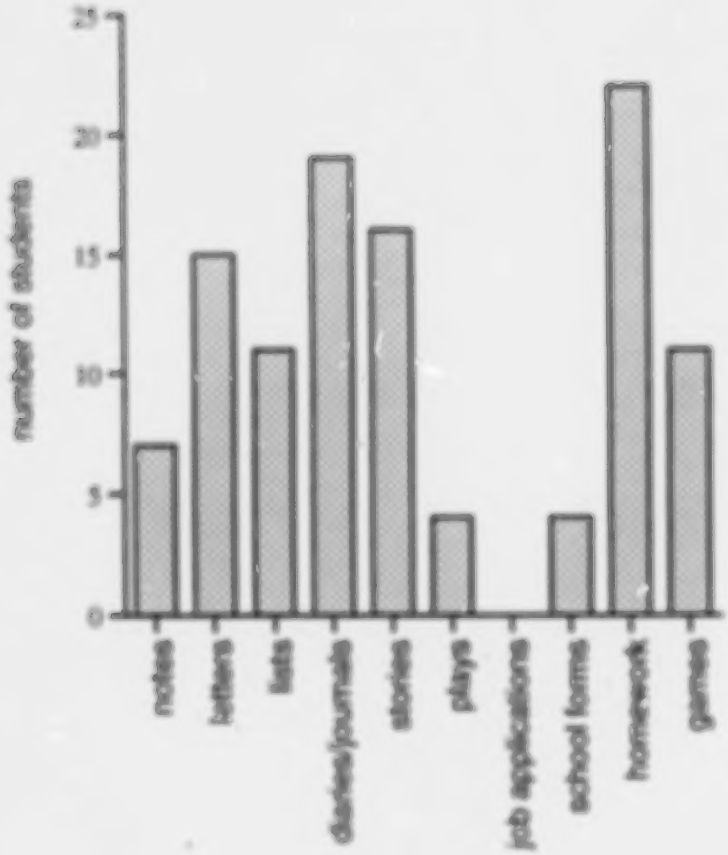

Figure 7b

Question 8 - Fourth Grade

The majority of fourth graders enjoy writing stories independently and with a friend (Figure 7). Many students welcome the opportunity to illustrate what they write. Over half of the class reported that they take pleasure in writing about themselves. However, they were reluctant to share these stories with an audience. This may be an indicator of wanting to keep this type of writing private and is relatively common for a ten year old. Most children responded favorably toward listening to peers share written work. During author sharing time, students often get ideas to assist them in their own written language.

Some students reported that they like to write at home. As indicated in Figure 7b, children write in a variety of ways at home. All students reported, they did writing involving homework at home. This response was expected, due to the fact that writing is a required component of the fourth grade curriculum. Half of the class participate in games as a form of writing. In general the results indicate an enjoyment of the writing process.

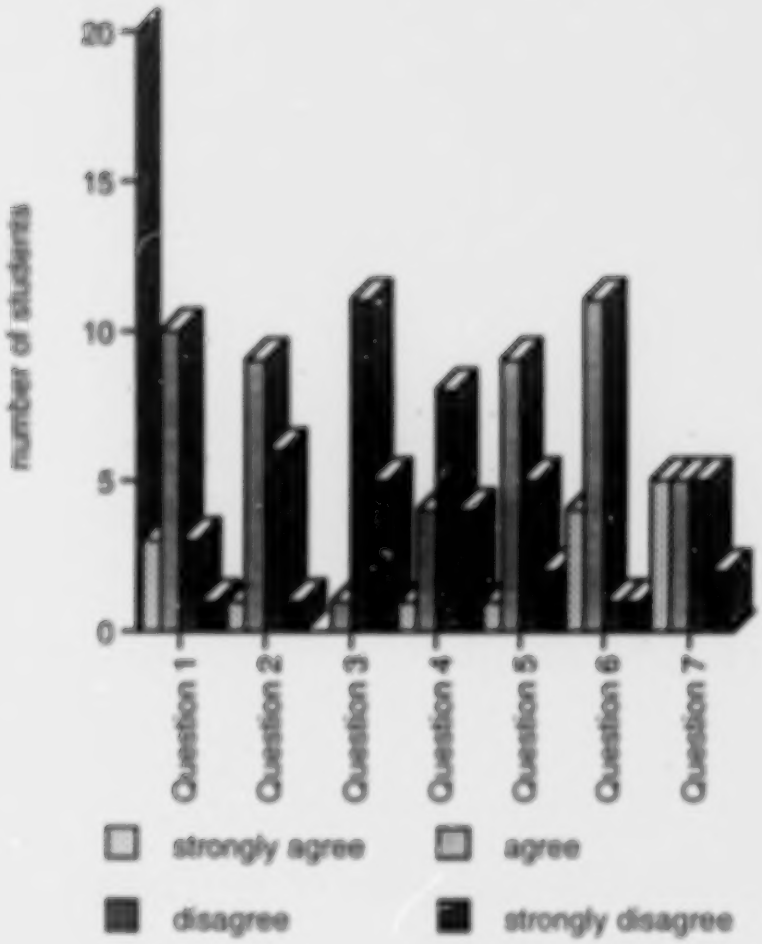

Figure 8

Student Questionnaire - Special Education High School

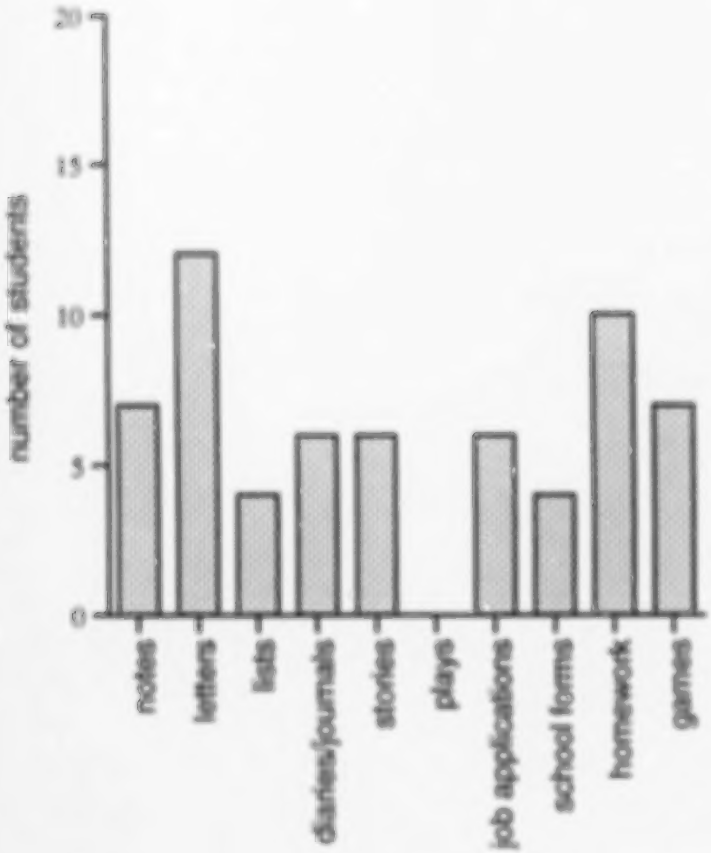

Figure 8b

Question 8 - Special Education High School

Over half of the high school students surveyed indicated they enjoy the writing process (Figure 8). Many children feel comfortable writing with peers, which becomes a support system for gaining strength and confidence in the writing experience. The majority of the targeted group indicated that they enjoy listening to others share their written work. There are mixed feelings about writing and sharing personal experiences. The students know themselves best and are more capable of writing a substantive piece, but are protective of their personal life and experiences. This then becomes a dilemma for the student. This type of child is not always able to integrate his or her encountered experiences into long or short term memory. Evidenced by the survey, many children do enjoy writing about themselves, because they *are* more successful in that venue (Marling, C. & Rhodes,L., 1986). Most children responded negatively towards sharing this type of writing. This may be typical of the age group and may also be influenced by their ability level. Illustrating was also unpopular in this group for the same reasons stated.

Over half of the students enjoy writing at home. This same population indicated that letters and homework were priorities. Given the age group, it was surprising to discover that more children had not had experience filling out job applications or school forms (Figure 8b).

A parent survey was used to determine children's writing patterns at home. It also focused on the amount and type of leisure activities participated in by the students outside of school. This was done to help understand how much these activities might affect the student's at-home opportunity for writing (Appendix D). In the second and fourth grades the survey was distributed in the fall at Back to School Night. Parents were instructed to complete it anonymously. For kindergarten and high school the survey was sent home with

a cover letter explaining its purpose (Appendices E and F). The parents were asked to answer the survey anonymously and return it to school.

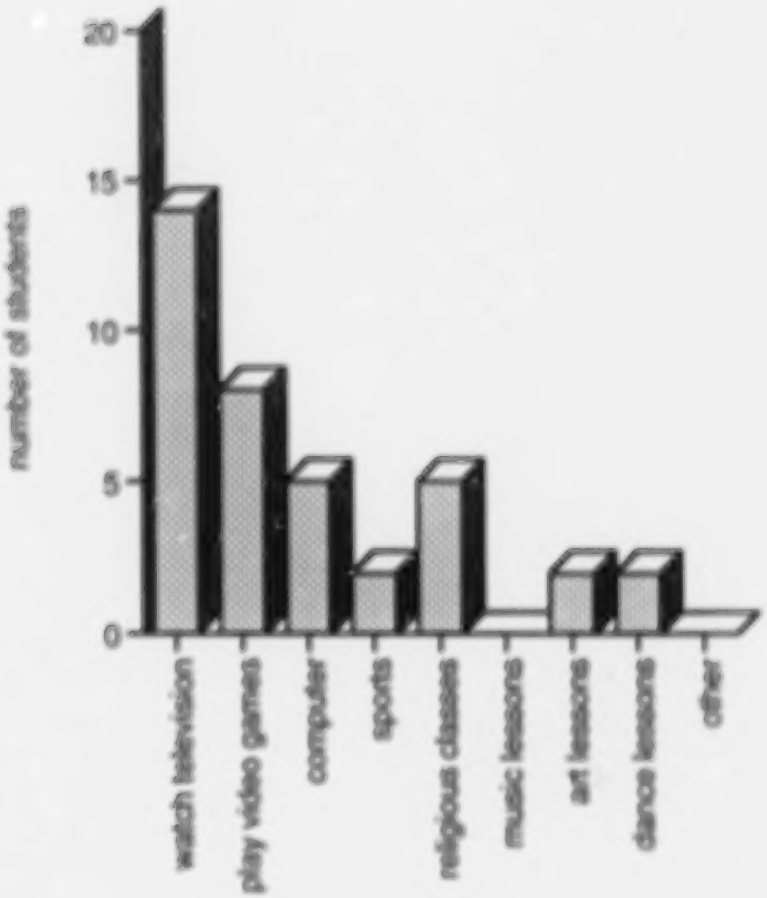

Figure 9

Leisure Time Activites - Kindergarten

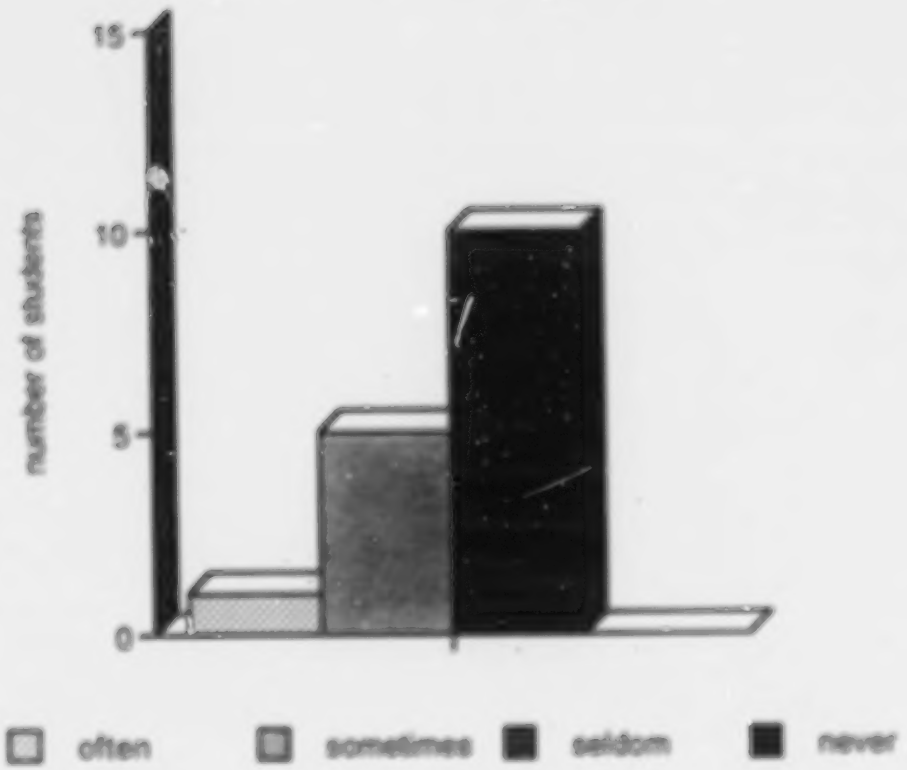

Figure 9b

How often does your child write at home? Kindergarten

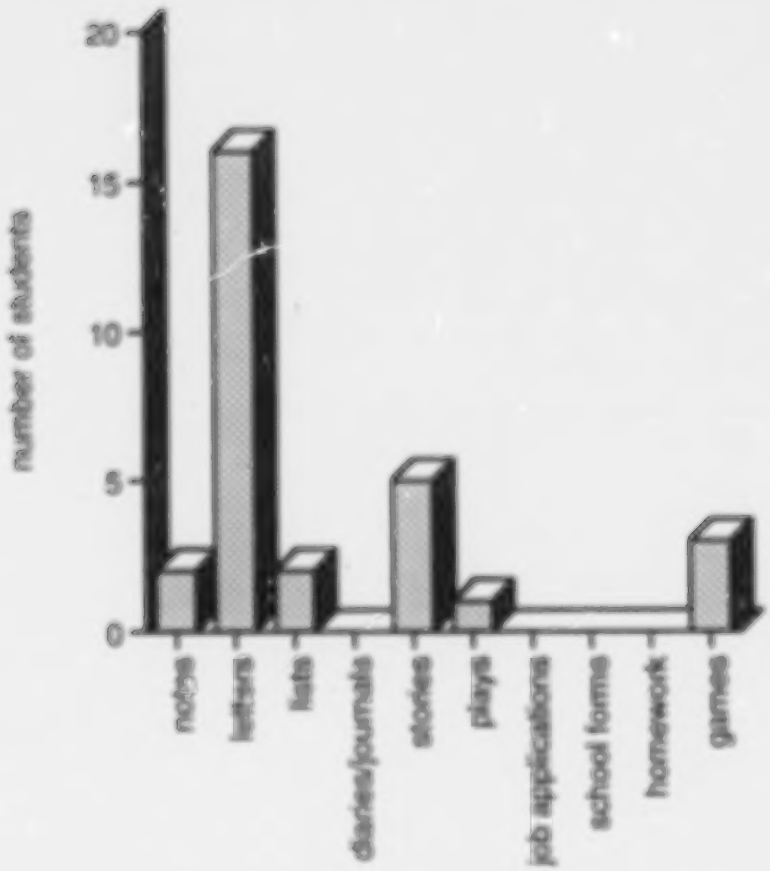

Figure 9c

Home Activities - Kindergarten

Children in Kindergarten spend a lot of time watching television and playing video games as indicated in Figure 9. Another activity which was recorded with frequency was participation in religious classes. Parents report that children seldom write at home (Figure 9b). Their interpretation of writing may not include illustrations. Letter writing is indicated in Figure 9c, as the most frequent writing activity done at home. This may vary from practicing letters of the alphabet to letters of communication.

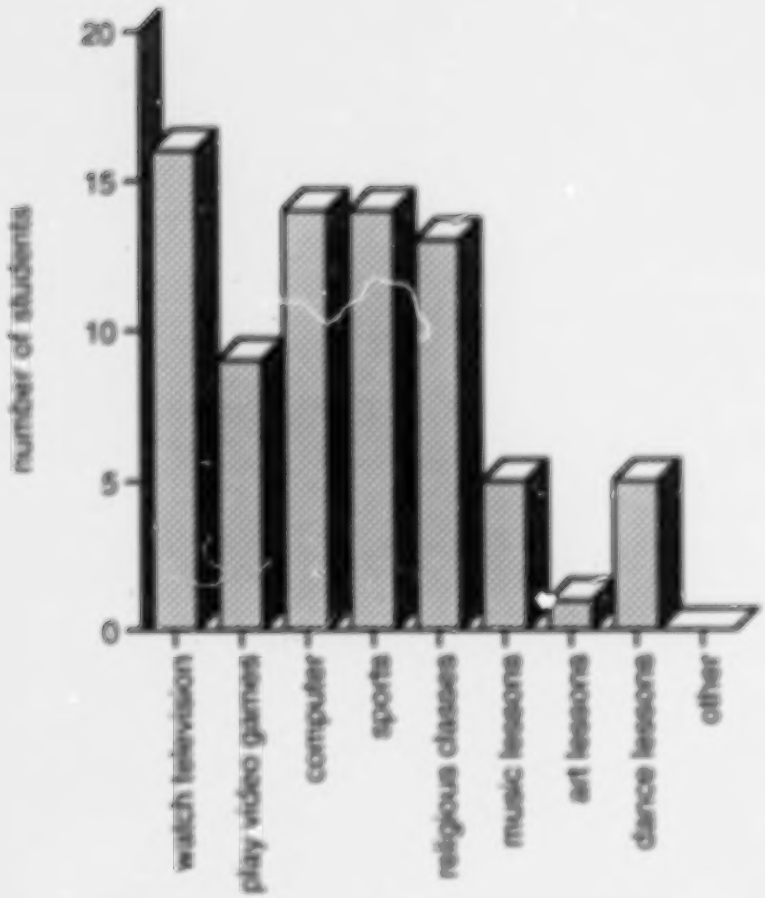

Figure 10

Leisure Time Activities - Second Grade

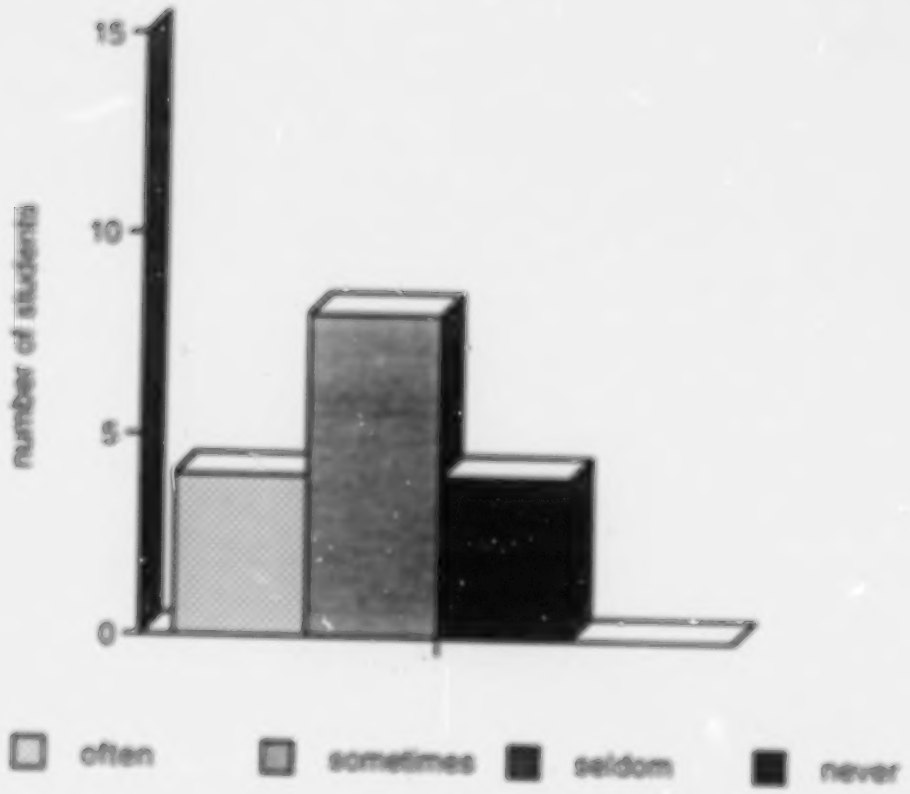

Figure 10b

How often does your child write at home? Second Grade

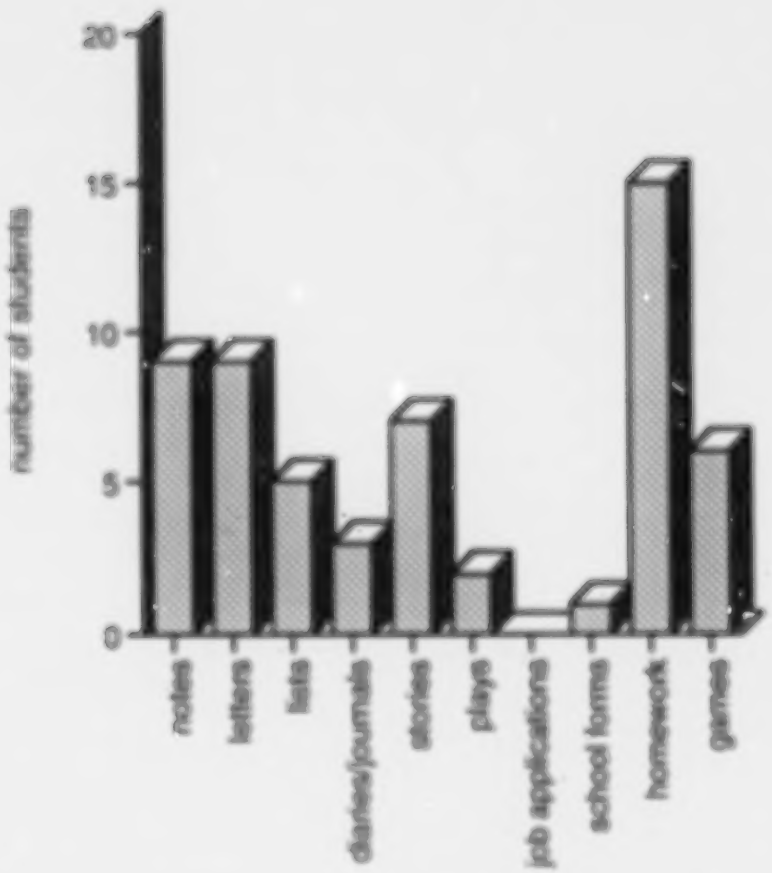

Figure 10c

Home Activities - Second Grade

Sixteen out of eighteen parents of the targeted second grade received this survey at the Back to School Night in September. Parents continue to report a large amount of television watching in Figure 10. However use of the computer and sports activities have increased markedly, compared with the Kindergarten sample. Figure 10 also shows that religious class opportunities become more available at this level and appear to be well attended. Video games seem to be less popular with this second grade class. The majority of the parents reported that children write sometimes at home with an almost equal number reporting often and seldom (Figure 10b).

Figure 10c indicates that homework is a major reason for written activity, but the writing of letters and notes is becoming more frequent. Some children appear to enjoy writing stories at home.

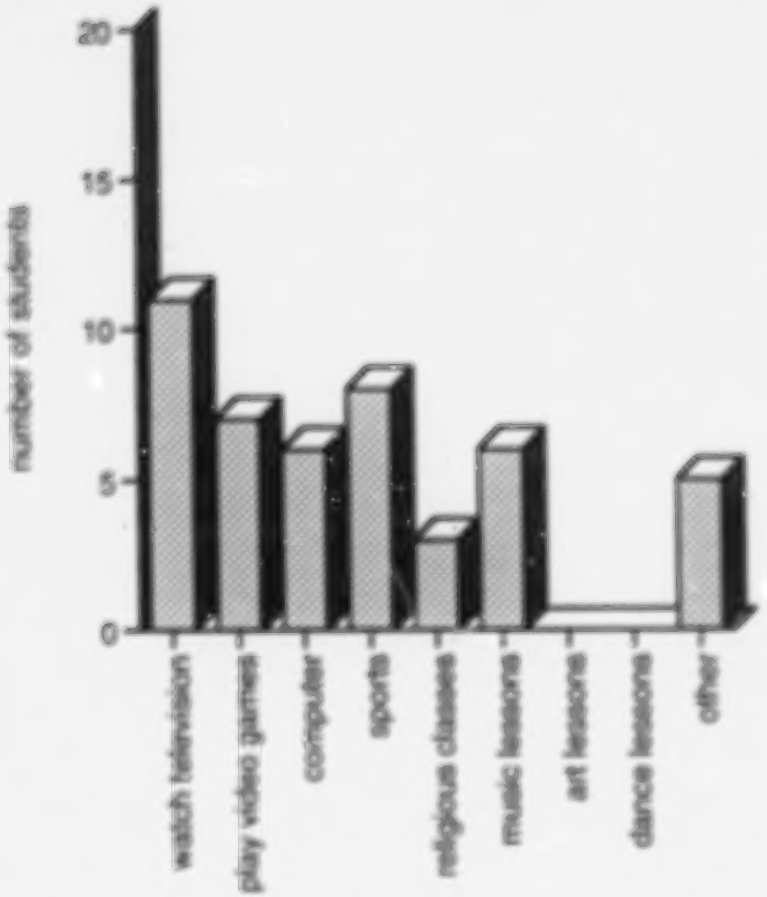

Figure 11

Leisure Time Activities - Fourth Grade

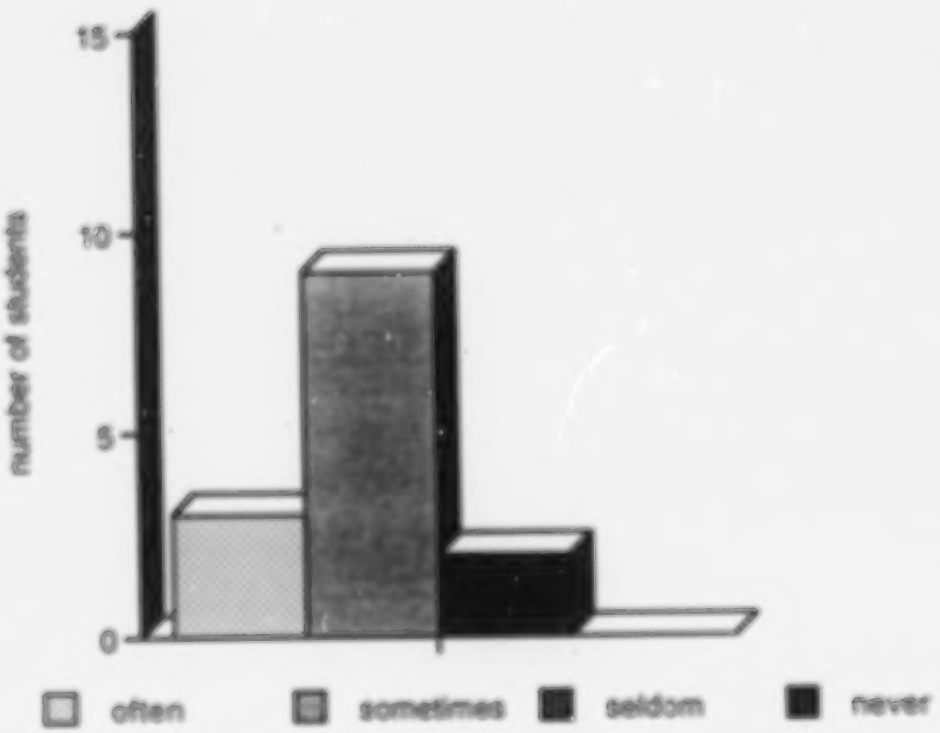

Figure 11b

How often does your child write at home? Fourth Grade

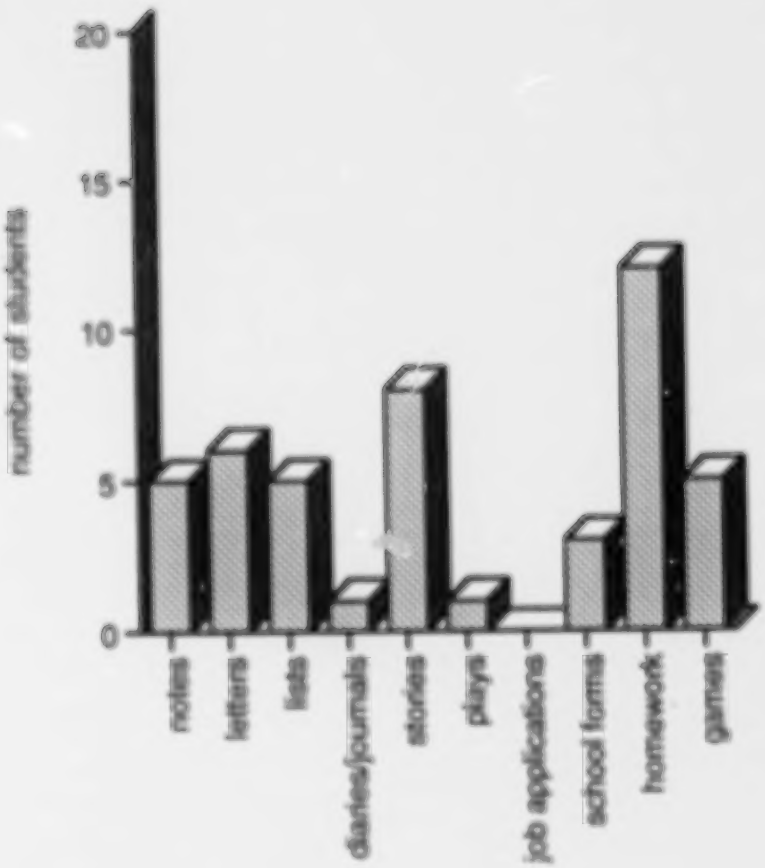

Figure 11c

Home Activities - Fourth Grade

Sixteen of the twenty-two targeted students' parents were present during the fall Fourth Grade Curriculum Night. The majority of parents reported that their children participated in activities that relate to television and technology. Other leisure pursuits that students are involved in outside of school were cited in Figure 11. Participation in sports appears to take up a large amount of leisure time in fourth grade. In this sample, students are involved in music lessons outside of school.

As indicated in Figure 11b parents felt that children used writing at home. A variety of writing topics were utilized in the household environment. Some children used notes and letters as a means of daily communication as indicated in Figure 11c. The most frequent type of writing done in the home setting was required by the teacher. This is reflective of the fourth grade curriculum.

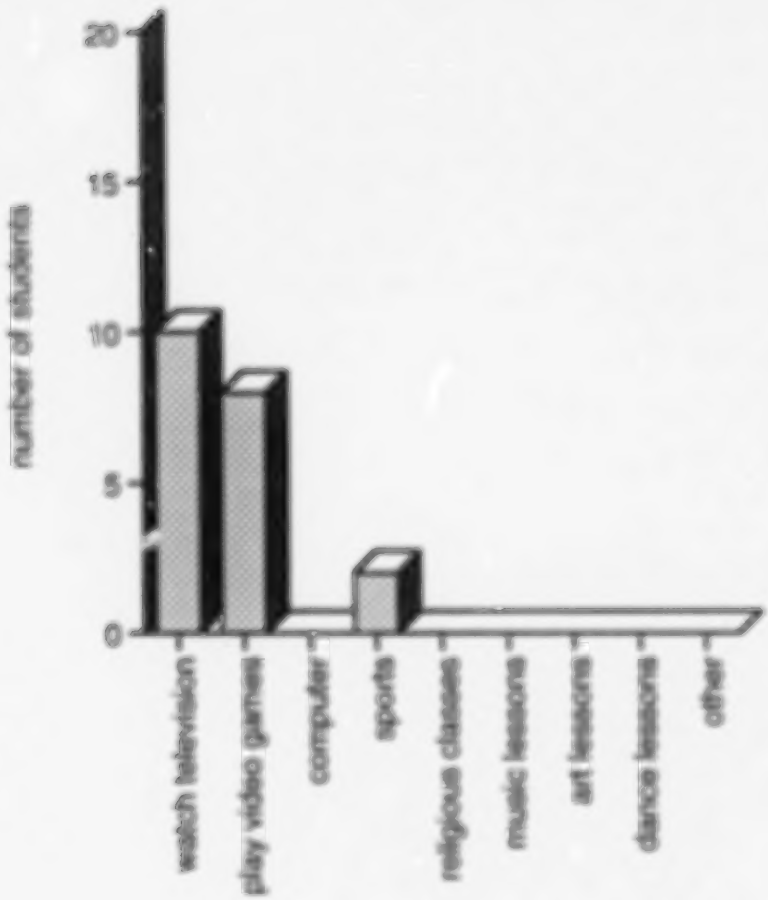

Figure 12

Leisure Time Activities - Special Education High School

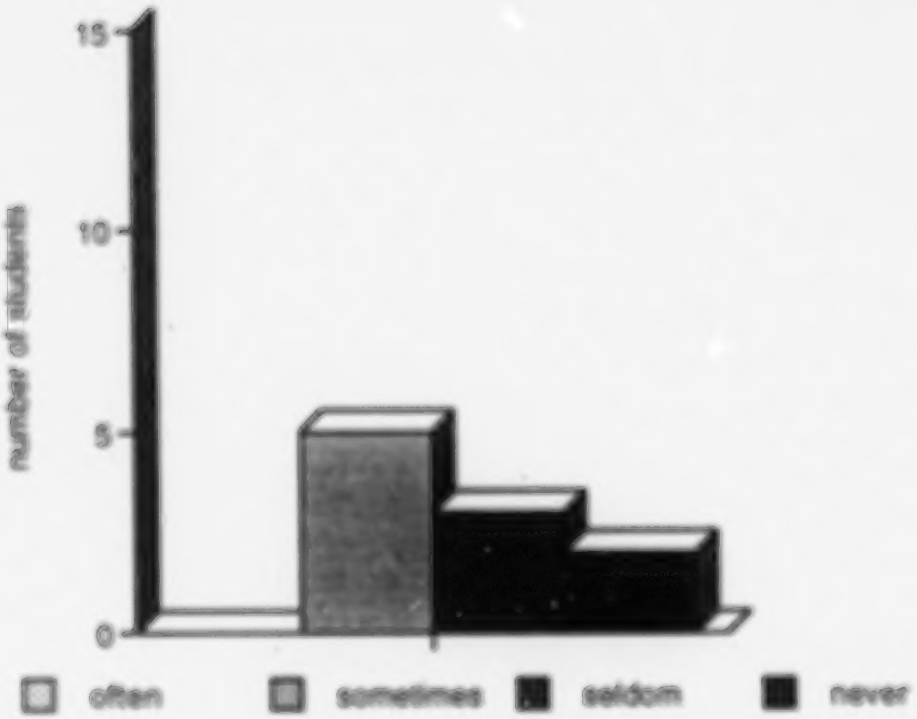

Figure 12b

How often does your child write at home?
Special Education High School

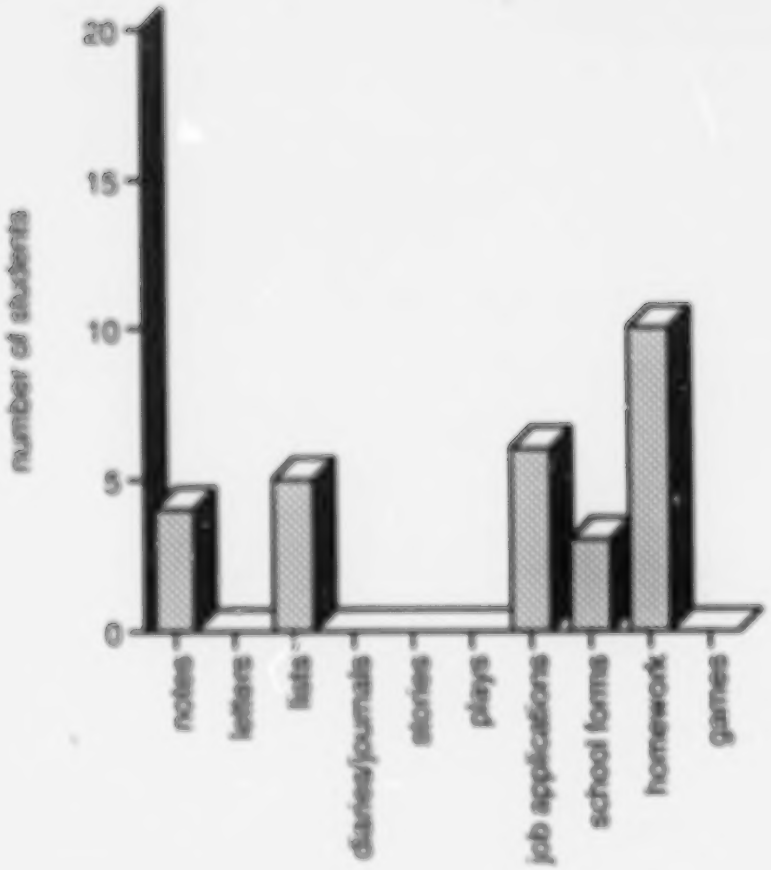

Figure 12c

Home Activities - Special Education High School

Parents of the high school targeted group reported a high level of television watching and video game playing as indicated in Figure 12. Sports are an infrequent use of leisure time. What becomes very apparent in this survey, is the lack of variety of outside leisure pursuits. Parents response to the question of how often a child writes at home indicates little to none in Figure 12b. Parents noted that when students are involved in writing tasks at home, homework assignments and job applications are the most frequently observed activities. Many of these students see no need for writing in their lives. The message wasn't instilled at home and many schools haven't done a good job either. To succeed with these students, we need to help them discover the power of print in their lives (Marling,C. & Rhodes, L., 1988). The more creative aspects of writing appear to be nonexistent. Notes and lists which do not require much higher order thinking were reported as part of their writing experiences outside of school (Figure 12c).

Probable Cause

In primary grades typical curriculum has focused on narrative writing. Some students write only about their personal experiences in story form. Children lack the exposure to guided expository writing (The Reading Teacher, 1995). In order to improve the quality of the targeted student writing, the Writers' Workshop model was chosen. This model addresses the causes of poor student writing through several avenues as described by Graves (1983) and Avery (1993). Changing educational attitudes and values have affected children's writing in different areas (Atwell, N., 1987). Parents, although aware of the developmental nature of learning to write, have expectations of mastery which are frequently unrealistic. Teachers are caught between the parent

expectations and knowledge that writing develops on its own schedule. Writing is more than a series of English skills that were traditionally covered in a basic program. Teaching writing is a continuum, not just discrete steps (Calkins, 1986). With increasing added curricular overload, the necessary extended times for writing in the school day are difficult to find (Cordiero, 1992).

The changing population in school districts everywhere presents additional concerns. Students who speak English as a second language need special help in language acquisition and development through writing about known experiences and personal involvements. Many native English speaking children also have fewer writing experiences due to increased leisure time activities, such as sports, video games, T.V., and other activities (Bennett, 1986). Parents are no longer able to supervise learning activities due to work schedules or single parenthood's added responsibilities (School Report Card, 1994; Annual Report, 1994).

Affecting writers from primary grades through high school is the minimal amount of time devoted to instruction and writing activities. Past practices have allowed for short answer and fill in the blank responses. These types of activities promote lower level thinking and limit's ability to produce expanded written language (Commission on Reading, 1985, p78).

In the high school setting, absenteeism plays a big part in academic decline, including writing (School Report Card, 1994). Not being in school consistently means loss of instruction time and diminishes the opportunity to practice the art of writing. The writing process is taught in small increments and frequent absences interrupt that flow. Atwell (1987) suggests that this may be attributed to the lack of time due to incremental scheduling, which does not allow for sustained writing effort.

Current leisure time activities have affected children's writing more dramatically than educators had previously thought. Children are so immersed in outside activities that the time for and value of writing is lost (Bennett, 1986). Today's teacher must bring excitement and enthusiasm to writing.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

Solutions found in the literature address the problem in various ways. Direct grammar and spelling instruction has been used for decades. Daily repetitive practice of the basic skills to build necessary rote writing techniques before composing meaningful pieces was a prevalent practice (Haley-James, 1986, Hougton Mifflin T.30). Use of a basic English program was another method of instruction which appeared to address the problem of conventional usage, but did not provide for ownership of the writing or communication of authentic student ideas (Daily Oral Language, 1993). In examining these writing methods, it was found that they do not address the problem of quality and variety in student writing nor enhance student ability to take ownership of writing (Calkins, 1986; Routman, 1991).

Writer's Workshop and all its components provide the students with varied writing and learning experiences. This approach to writing instruction recognizes problems which were not addressed in previous language curriculum practices. The workshop model allows students to express their own ideas through student generated or teacher assigned topics (Zemelman, Daniels, Hyde, 1993). These opportunities provide for variety and ownership of communication. Through mini lessons, instruction in conventions can be and must be covered within the context of the children's own writing (Graves, 1991; Calkins, 1986).

Writing centers within the classroom provide students with an opportunity to create and express ideas with a variety of materials (Avery, 1986). The teacher becomes more available to guide and monitor individual students as they work, by shifting the responsibility of choice to students. In essence, the role of the teacher becomes a facilitator. In addition, writing centers are attractive and provide motivation and involvement with written expression.

The writing process in action includes topic choice, drafting, conferencing, revising, editing and final publication (Zemelman, Daniels, Hyde, 1993). Children frequently choose topics to write about through brainstorming, personal interest, responses to literature and their own experiences. All these and more are sources of topics for Writer's Workshop. Students are encouraged to write for pleasure and without pressure. During this time children are urged to share their writing with others. Revisions and editing changes may be made by the author in response to their audiences questions and comments. Through sharing writing with an audience, children may check their work for clarity in the expression of their ideas (Avery, 1993).

Writer's Workshop includes the opportunity to integrate writing across the curriculum (Pappas, 1990). Writing in curricular areas such as science and social studies helps to clarify student thinking and learning. Students may use graphic organizers as a tool to help them write in content areas. Graphic organizers help to order the children's thoughts and give focus to what the child is trying to express (Zemelman, Daniels, Hyde, 1993). Graphic organizers provide children an opportunity to use another modality and see their thoughts visually on paper and hopefully in an order that helps their thoughts come together.

In addition to school experiences with writing, it is evident that writing at home is equally important and beneficial to the development of the student's written communication (Akroyd, 1995). Parents modeling writing for all purposes is an integral part of a child's writing development. It is important for students to see the value and use of written communication in everyday life.

Project Outcomes and Solutions Components

Our Terminal Objective states, as a result of the use of Writer's Workshop during the months of September 1995, through February 1996, students from the targeted classes will increase their ability to write with quality and variety as measured by responses to teacher created prompts, student portfolios and teacher journals. In order to accomplish the terminal objective the following processes are necessary:

1. develop a series of mini lessons,
2. establish structure for peer conferencing,
3. provide opportunities for free writing times,
4. provide opportunities for disseminating writing products.

In addition to these intermediate objectives, materials and scheduling must be considered.

Action Plan for Intervention

The following is the plan for this intervention.

1. Develop Series of Mini Lessons

Who: Kindergarten class , 17 students, whole class instruction
Second grade class, 18 students, whole class instruction

Fourth grade class, 22 students, whole class instruction
Special Education Sophomore English class, 17 students, whole class instruction

Why: Help students think about writing process
Develop writing skills
Help students feel comfortable with writing
Develop routine for Writers' Workshop period

Where: In targeted classrooms

When: Three times a week
15 minutes per session
September through February

What: Teacher models writing process
Role play
Writing skills (punctuation, mechanics, conventions, organization, etc.)
Establish routines (time management, teacher assistance, publishing,readiness)
Topic Discovery Techniques
Qualities of good writing

2. Establish a Structure for Peer Conferencing

Who: Kindergarten class, 17 students partners or cooperative groups selected by students
Second grade class, 18 students, partners or cooperative groups selected by students
Fourth grade class, 22 students, partners or cooperative groups selected by students
Special Education Sophomore English class, 17 students, partners or cooperative groups selected by students

Why: To help improve variety; children receive ideas from peers; confidence builder; promotes self-esteem and reflection process of writing; build independent and responsible writers.

Where: In the targeted classrooms.

When: During the Writer's Workshop period as needed
Peer conferencing will occur during every 45 minute writers workshop period (3 times weekly)
Kindergarten - 5 minutes
Second grade - 10 minutes
Fourth grade - 15 minutes
Special Ed. - 10 minutes

What: Provide a classroom environment that is conducive to peer conferencing; quiet areas, centers, carrels in Library (areas), peer editing checklist. Children will work in partners to provide feedback in the following areas:
revision (adding more details)
editing (punctuation)
focus (staying on topic)

3. Provide Opportunities for Free Writing Time.

Who: Kindergarten class, 17 students, whole class instruction
Second grade class, 18 students, whole class instruction
Fourth grade class, 22 students, whole class instruction
Special Education Sophomore English class, 17 students whole class instruction

Why: To provide opportunities for writing on student or instructor selected topics

Where: In the targeted classrooms

When: Three times a week for 45 minute periods, from September to February

What: Provide students with prompts, journals, folders (working folder and portfolios for finished product), different writing utensils, different kinds of paper for illustrating, brainstorming topics and vocabulary usage.

Portfolios are student chosen artifacts over time of favorite pieces of writing with a reflection of choice included.

Example: I want to include this piece of writing in my portfolio because_____.

4. Provide Opportunities for Disseminating Their Writing Products.

Who: Kindergarten class, 17 students, whole class instruction
Second grade class, 18 students, whole class instruction
Fourth grade class, 22 students, whole class instruction
Special Education Sophomore English class, 17 students, whole class instruction

Why: Practice reading and writing as a social act
Provide closure to the Writer's Workshop period
Show that writing is a form of communication
Provide purpose to writing
Acknowledge that motivation helps quality and variety
Provide purpose for revision and drafting

Where: In the targeted classrooms or other areas.
Examples:
Reading Corner
Author's Chair
A special area in the building that is convenient to meet students' needs.

The reading corner is a place where children sit together or alone reading and looking at a variety of books. It is a place where children are quietly sharing together. Contained in this area are trade books authored by the children. Usually in the reading corner there are pillows, beanbags, or anything to help make this area a comfortable and welcoming place.

The author's chair is a special chair where children share their writing with a group. This chair is a place where children share their writing in various

stages of the writing process. It provides an opportunity to receive feedback from peers and enables other children to get ideas for their own writing.

When: Last 10 minutes of the Writer's Workshop period, during each 45 minute period, three times weekly.

What: Author's chair: approximately two students share orally during one period.
Audience (peers) verbally respond to stories during this process.
Students use binders, covers, paper, pencils, markers, etc. and word processors to make their finished products.

Student products could include: Big books, class books, individual books, stories, letters or poetry during any point in the writing process.

These plans are adapted to fit the level of the targeted classrooms. It is necessary to adjust the lessons due to the diversity of pupils.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the intervention, a variety of tools will be used. Writing prompts will be administered to students to establish baseline and ending performance. Rubrics will be developed to evaluate the writing performance. In addition surveys, journals and portfolios will be included in the assessment process.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve the quality and variety of children's writing. The implementation of Writer's Workshop with the addition of mini lesson strategies was selected to effect the desired changes in children's writing.

Writer's Workshop is an approach to writing instruction that affords the students an opportunity to write freely about personally meaningful topics at their own developmental level. It is of the utmost importance that children be provided with a safe, comfortable environment in order for their writing experiences to be successful. Writer's Workshop also provides students the opportunity to share their writing with others at any stage of the writing process and/or to receive feedback from peers or teachers.

Intervention School A

Second graders in the targeted classroom in school A already were experienced authors. They had kept journals and reading response logs, some

on a daily basis, during the previous year. The introduction of Writer's Workshop brought an enthusiastic response from the majority of students.

Writer's Workshop occurred three times weekly for the duration of the year. Each session was comprised of a five to ten minute mini lesson, a time for writing and conferring, and a time for Author's Chair or sharing time which was usually ten minutes. Each workshop was scheduled for a total of forty-five minutes. Early mini lessons were used to establish workshop procedures, behavioral expectations, conference etiquette and the record keeping process (Appendix G). Student input was given on all aspects of the process and votes were taken when appropriate. Folders for each student with all writing drafts and the record keeping material were kept (Appendix H).

The preliminary writing from this group came from author generated topics. Each student kept a list of possible topics for writing, which helped when ideas ran dry. The second graders generally were able to think of a variety of possibilities, but some needed help to generate even a few ideas.

Most early mini lessons arose through the needs of the children as seen by the teacher during individual conferences. Mini lessons addressed the following topics: punctuation, capitalization, quotation marks, other conventions and the use of complete sentences. Movement toward conventional spelling was encouraged for most students. Through peer and teacher conferences, students became more aware of the importance of keeping a focus to the story as they wrote. They also were made aware of the importance of using sufficient details to make the story interesting and understandable.

The teacher modeled the skill of the mini lesson being taught. Often modeling of the skill could be found through children's literature.

Writing process topics such as editing and revision techniques also were modeled.

At all stages of the piece's development, the children were encouraged to share their writing with others. Children used peer conferring freely for support and suggestions. When a revision was indicated, however, it was met with resistance. It was frequently difficult to get the author to make necessary changes. The students used Author's Chair most frequently when a piece was completed and they chose to share it orally with the class. There were other options available to the students to publish their works. They could decide to make a classroom book, either spiral or soft cover bound, or they could decide to publish their work through the Parent Publishing Center. When a student selected to publish in written form, editing and revision with the teacher was required. For some students, the teacher did part of the editing to avoid discouragement and frustration. The author might then go to the Parent Publishing Center to be interviewed for an author biography, dedication, and author suggestion for pagination and illustration. The parent typed story was returned to the author for illustration. The book was then bound by the parents.

A problem became apparent as the students continued to write. Some of the more prolific writers did not understand how to use story structure when they were writing about their own experiences. Girls, in particular, wrote almost diary-like pieces of thirty pages with no ending in sight! The teacher had to develop a pre-writing plan which guided children's thinking and planning through the end of the story (Appendix I). Children became more familiar with this pre-writing plan and requested its use for many of their other stories. Models of appropriate story writing were used and discussed during read aloud times.

Mini lessons on other genre, such as expository writing followed. The students were introduced to this genre through teacher read-aloud experiences. The teacher used mini lessons to model the different genre. Following these lessons, the class was instructed to practice writing in a specific genre. The teacher then was able to ascertain if the students understood what had been modeled. One expository piece was on the topic of Mexico, a country studied at this grade level. Visual organizers, such as semantic maps, were used as pre-writing activities (Appendix J). Students were given the opportunity to select their own topics and use other forms of organizers.

In addition to narrative and expository writing experiences, the students also were given lessons exposing them to letter writing, poetry and biography. Crafting techniques, such as "interest grabbing" beginnings and use of unusual words were taught as well.

Throughout the Writer's Workshop experiences, the teacher conferenced with individuals and small groups, keeping anecdotal records on each student's progress and suggestions for further experiences. Editing and revision activities were the least favorite parts of the workshop, as evidenced by some students reluctance to rework a piece. Publishing was the great incentive for the students to rework their writing.

Implementation of the Writer's Workshop model in fourth grade began with students designing a file folder in which to keep their writing over the course of the school year. They were able to express their feelings and attitudes towards written language in an artistic domain. It was apparent to the instructor that students enjoyed drawing pictures that represented prior writing encounters. Mutual to all pupils were illustrations of pencils, pens and notebooks which symbolized common writing utensils. The preponderance of

fourth graders had sketches of peers engaged in the writing process. Collaborative creative writing was indicated with illustrations of authors composing written language in groups. Additional pictures were explicit representations of a classroom writing environment. This initial experience to the writing program was comfortable for all students. Individual folders were laminated and a spiral notebook was kept and used for first draft written work.

To insure that a variety of topics would be addressed throughout the year, Writer's Workshop Topic Sheets were stapled in the folders (Appendix K). Children generated lists of possible story topics to write that included ideas and interests in many genres. The students appeared to be excited and enthusiastic while completing this task. During this process, pupils were encouraged to share their interests with peers, and this often helped them to complete the activity successfully. The lists which students brainstormed became especially valuable at the beginning of the writing process.

Approximately once a month students were required to reflect upon the written work that they had completed during this time frame. A written self-evaluation tool was an essential component of this procedure (Appendix L). Students would then meet in a conference format with the fourth grade teacher. This appointment was a collaborative effort between the student and teacher to improve the chosen piece of writing. After the student completed the revisions, he or she would proceed to the publication component of the workshop model. Final products were shared with the class through Author's Chair, written format, or audio and video taping.

Data collected from the topic sheets (Appendix K) indicated a powerful interest in research and report writing in fourth grade. The majority of pupils had a variety of topics which they wanted to learn more about and wanted to

teach to the other students through their writing. In the workshop model, this is sometimes referred to as "teaching books" (Fletcher, 1993). A series of mini lessons to address this area of interest were developed by the instructor. The focus was to provide students with the necessary skills to become confident research writers.

The objective of the first lesson was to expose children to published expository writing. Many different issues of Ranger Rick Magazine were used as text. Children were instructed to examine and explore their issue to choose an article that was of interest to them. A class discussion followed that focused on the components of reports. The students identified the introduction, the middle paragraphs and the conclusion. This experience culminated with the instructor distributing a handout explaining the different sections of a report (Appendix M).

The focus of the next mini lessons was on research skills. A pre-research outline was used to assist students in planning for gathering information (Appendix N). Children were required to write down what they knew about their topics. The next step was to generate questions to be answered by researching their chosen topics.

These questions were written on individual index cards and used for gathering information. For this lesson the Writer's Workshop period was conducted in the school library to enable access to a variety of resources and references. When children located answers to questions, this information was recorded on the corresponding index cards.

After data collection was completed, the next mini lessons were devoted to constructing the different components of a report. Instruction focused on writing introductions, middle paragraphs, and conclusions (Appendix M).

Students used the information on their index cards to write middle paragraphs. The concept stressed to the students, was that each card represented a seperate paragraph.

When this process was completed the classroom had a collection of original expository texts. Children enjoyed sharing books and learning new information from their peers. It was apparent that the mini lesson provided the framework for independent expository writing.

A mini lesson on elaboration was used in the fourth grade. The majority of fourth grade students experienced difficulty adding details to written work. Instruction was conducted in small groups while students shared written drafts aloud. The teacher circled areas in stories that needed further description and asked children to tell more about what was circled in their work. The term elaboration was introduced and referred to as a synonym for "blabbing" or talking a lot about something. Using blabbing for elaborating made this skill meaningful for students. Adding details to written language was frequently demonstrated in subsequent Writer's Workshop lessons.

The self editing technique occurred with the onset of Writer's Workshop. Children in fourth grade had many experiences in previous grades participating in the revision process. Peer editing and consultation were paramount components of the fourth grade model. The objective to this mini lesson was to introduce students to the peer editing model. A worksheet was designed by the instructor to facilitate the process (Appendix O). In addition to this structured program, students frequently shared written language in an informal manner during workshop periods.

Intervention School B

The High School EMH classroom is the the targeted group at school B. This targeted group appeared to have had no prior experience with the Writer's Workshop concept. When the initial writing prompt was administered, the majority of the class responded with shock and fear. How were they to write about this? How did the instructor want them to write? They did not understand the question, but more importantly, they did not know and could not remember anything to write about. It certainly became evident that writing for this group would initially have to be in response to specific prompts. The concept of free writing was not one understood or embraced easily.

Writer's Workshop was gradually introduced through the use of mini lessons. The first lesson dealt with writing a complete sentence, using capitals and appropriate final punctuation. There was some detailed discussion on this subject and several examples were written incorrectly on the board (Appendix P). Then each student was to copy the sentences correctly. Confirmation of their responses was given immediately by the teacher on an individual basis.

It needs to be noted that the targeted class B had to address the issue of time. The high school setting does not allow for class expansion beyond the established 44 minute class period. More often than not, there was insufficient time to complete an assignment on a given day. Administrative responsibilities, students settling down to work and having to reset the room each day took anywhere from five to ten minutes of class time. More time was needed to explain a concept to this EMH group to the point of understanding. On subsequent days, re-explanation was needed to refocus the class to the task at hand. Most often "carry over" did not occur, so time had to be built in to re-explain the ongoing material one more time from a new point of reference.

This group was unfamiliar with the use of portfolios. To make their first experience special, plain pizza boxes were obtained from neighboring restaurants. The students assembled, decorated and identified their own boxes anyway they chose. The boxes were kept in a secured place.

In order to develop this group's comfort level with the writing process, a mini lesson was presented that dealt with action words, formally known as verbs. The students were given a list of verbs to use from (Appendix Q). They were to pick three to five different verbs to use in complete sentences. The assignment was taken one step further. The students were to incorporate these sentences into a short story or paragraph that had continuity. This activity gave them an opportunity to transfer and incorporate some of the skills from other mini lessons in a free writing experience. To ensure that the idea and use of action words became common place, the students were instructed that they would need to be able to act out their short story for the class. This was done in an effort to cement the idea of verbs as action words. The intent was that the students become comfortable and use these conventions with more appropriate frequency in their everyday writing.

One of the most unexpectedly exciting mini lessons presented to this group had to do with verb tenses. The group had a very difficult time with present, past and future usage of verbs. They were each given a sheet with a list of verbs. The first column was labeled Today I (Appendix R) and present tense verbs were listed below. The other three columns on this sheet were labeled Yesterday I, I Have and I Will. The students were to write the correct tense of the verb in each of the remaining columns. They were so excited by this exercise that the class became one big cooperative group. The energy

from this lesson was used to try to write a cooperative class story using at least one form of each verb in it.

A most surprising aspect was the resistance this group displayed to almost every non-directed writing assignment. An example of this was when the students were given their own composition books. They were truly excited. A special cover sheet was designed (Appendix S). They decorated the front cover any way they chose. They were assured that these books were to be a private, safe place to write about anything. No one would read them except for the instructor and then, only to deal solely with the issues of correct sentence structure and spelling. The teacher was not to judge or respond to the content, unless specifically asked to do so by the student. The students' resistance was still strong, since they had nothing to write about and could not remember anything to share. They were more willing, although somewhat reluctantly, to write within a structured environment. It appears that to write on a specific topic, even one they were unhappy about, may have been a safer writing situation for them. Providing the students with an open writing assignment may have been outside their comfort level.

Trying to get this group to become more comfortable and enjoy any writing experience may not be an objective that this group could attain. Their reaction to free writing time was often very negative and sometimes nasty. Their frustration tolerance was quite low when dealing with a free writing experience. Their consistent complaint was that they could never think of anything on which to write. They consistently maintained that nothing ever happened and they never went anywhere of interest. As a result, they had no experiences on which to draw. When the teacher suggested that they make up a story, the idea seemed totally beyond their grasp. The writing experience

challenged them to think at a higher level than they had been used to functioning in order to produce a written piece.

Many experiences with new expressive vocabulary words were offered in other mini lessons to expose them to other words, as well as evoking thoughts and feelings that might be transferred to paper. New vocabulary experiences were given on a weekly basis to add to their reservoir of accessible words (Appendix T). It is hoped that some of these words would be used in their future writing experiences.

Other mini lessons provided them with a story telling structure (Appendix U). Short stories were used to model. The objective of these, lessons was to develop a logical writing sequence. Written material should have a beginning, middle and end pertaining to one topic, feeling or incident. Just getting these students to

write, seemed almost to achieve the goal of this project. The quality and variety of the writing done by this group has most certainly improved from whence it began.

Intervention School C

The targeted kindergarten children in School C were encouraged during a Writer's Workshop to write or draw a picture about anything that interested them. When Writer's Workshop was introduced to the kindergarten class it was explained through a mini lesson. The different ways to go about writing were demonstrated (Appendix V).

In the mini lesson, the process by which a writer creates a piece of writing was demonstrated. The students responded well to this example. They were shown examples of journals. They became comfortable with journals and

began to understand that this was their own book filled with their own writing. They really enjoyed sharing these books with others and showing what they had created. They were motivated by receiving positive feedback from their peers. As the time went on, children became very enthusiastic toward the journal component of the Writer's Workshop.

Writer's Workshop was worked on during the "free play" portion of this group's day. This enabled the students to chose to come to the writing area. Many children displayed interest and enthusiasm. Some students did not choose Writer's Workshop as their first choice activity. All the students were, however, encouraged to try to make some time to visit the Writer's Workshop center during their "free play" activity. This helped the children understand the effort required to work on their journals or to make a book with a creative story (Appendix W).

During the period of this intervention, Writer's Workshop was implemented a few times as a whole group lesson, rather than as an individual choice. Students were asked to work on their writing during this specific time frame. The results showed that many students did not want to write in a formal setting and their motivation was very low, and for some frustration was high. As a result of this observation, Writer's Workshop continued to be a choice activity during the kindergarten's "free play" part of their day. This was essential to promote interest and spark motivation. The teacher worked with students individually and in small groups. The process as well as the product was increased because the children were given the freedom to choose when to write.

As the students became more comfortable with the Writer's Workshop, they were able to look back at their previous work or picture pages and were

able to read or reexplain their pictures with ease. The students took ownership of their work and thoughts. Children drew pictures for the stories they dictated and even after a few days they were able to "read" or tell their story again with the same content. (All students at this point were not developmentally ready to read.)

The kindergarten students were able to write about topics with which they were familiar, such as, their family, their birthday, or any other personal experience. A mini lesson devoted to the family, helped the students to develop the ability to focus on one topic. Discussion was generated between the students, explaining the concept to each other. The students each were asked to choose and write about one of the topics they had been discussing, such as their family (Appendix X).

Another mini lesson demonstrated the beginning, the middle, and the end of a story. Familiar stories were read to the whole class and discussion of what happened in the beginning, the middle and the end of the stories was initiated. The children were given three different pieces of colored paper to help them differentiate the beginning, the middle and the end of a story. This particular mini lesson was briefly reviewed once a week. Students became more aware of the beginning, the middle and the end in their own writing and in the books they read.

The Language Experience Approach (L.E.A.) was used to help students remember what happened in stories read aloud to the whole class. Students were asked to dictate a part of the story they remembered or a part that they liked the best. Each student's words were written out in large letters showing students how specific letters put together formed words. Students were asked to draw a picture to express the words they dictated about the story. Next, the

pictures were put in order and became a class book of the specific story previously read to the class.

A writing center was also established to help students develop and create their own writing experience. The writing center contained a table with a variety of papers, markers, pencils, scissors, hole punchers , staplers, and rulers. Students were encouraged to visit the writing center any time they were interested to create a book, a letter, a note, etc. (Appendix Y).

Each student would be individually self-evaluated on his or her writing through oral questions asked by the teacher (Appendix L). Student-teacher conferences were held daily to talk about student writing in journals, stories created or student self-evaluations. Writer's Workshop was implemented three days a week and journals were worked with on two days a week.

The kindergarten students have become comfortable and have understood the expectations of Writer's Work shop. As the year progressed and students practiced their writing, it became apparent that these targeted kindergarten children have improved the quality and variety in their writing.

Presentation and Analysis of Results.

Two ways were used to measure progress after intervention. A post intervention writing prompt was administered to the targeted classrooms (Appendix Z). The writing samples were scored by the facilitators according to the previous rubic developed (Appendix B). The students were again given 15 minutes to respond to the prompt. A post intervention student attitudinal questionnaire about writing (Appendix C) was administered. The survey was given during the same month as the post intervention prompt.

In the the graphs shown on the subsequent pages, the following questions were used and remain constant for the post intervention evaluation of a writer discussion:

2. Does the writer use detail?
3. Does the writer use conventions?
4. Does the writer have a focus?
5. Does the writer organize and have a beginning, middle and end ?
6. Does the writer use expressive vocabulary?
7. Does the writer use the writing process appropriately?

Question one was determined not to be appropriate for use at this time with the baseline writing prompt (Appendix B) because the topic was predetermined.

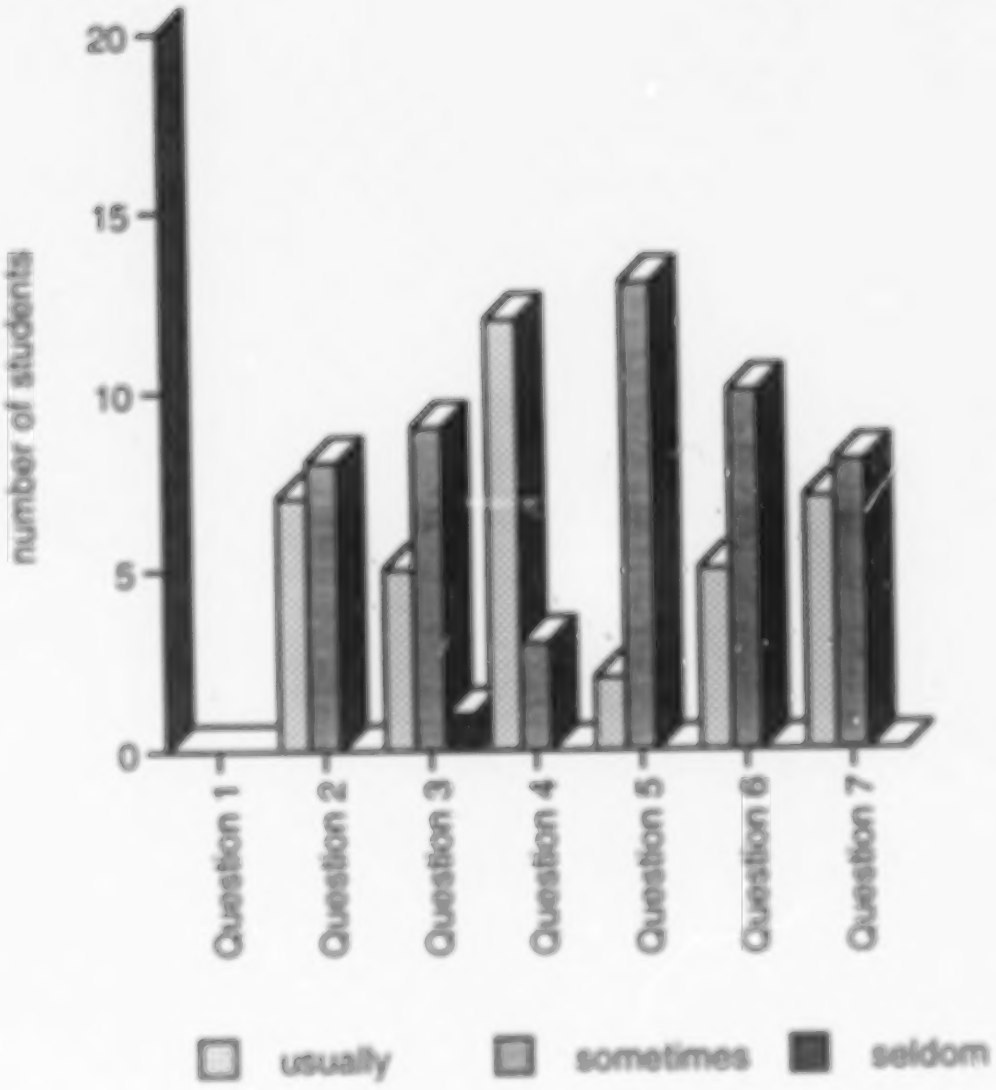

Figure 13

Post Intervention Evaluation of a Writer
Kindergarten

The targeted kindergarten students were asked to discuss and write about how they have helped someone else. Most of the children had a hard time thinking of whom they have helped. The kindergarten students needed a lot of encouragement and had to brainstorm with the teacher. The teacher asked students the following questions to help them think of the specific topic: "Have you ever helped someone at home such as your mom, dad, brother or sister?" "How did you help them?" These are examples of questions used to jog the student's memories to help them decide on what they could write about.

The data showed that seven students used detail in their dictation and illustrations for this writing prompt. The data also showed that eight out of 15 students sometimes used detail. When this data from the post-intervention prompt was compared to the data for the pre-intervention writing prompt on evaluation of a writer, it was noted that students increased their use of detail.

It needs to be noted that students at the kindergarten level have not yet learned, nor are necessarily developmentally ready to use appropriate writing construction. Students have just begun to learn about this aspect of writing.

The data in question 4 showed that 12 out of 15 students usually were focused on what they were writing. It seemed to help that the students were given a specific topic such as "helping another person." Kindergartners practiced staying focused on one topic through mini lessons.

The data for question 5 showed that only two out of 15 students usually had a beginning, a middle and an end to their writing (dictation) as shown in Figure 13. Thirteen of these kindergarten students sometimes had a beginning, a middle, and an end to their writing (dictation). Comparing this data to Figure 1, students have made an improvement. This technique was stressed

throughout the intervention. The students practiced and appear to have grasped this concept.

The results of question 6 indicated an increase in use of expressive language. In Figure 13, five out of 15 students demonstrated the use of expressive language. Ten students sometimes used expressive language through read-a-louds and group discussions.

Question 7 asked about the appropriate uses of the writing process. The data represented in Figure 1 was comparable to the data in Figure 13. No change has occurred. Kindergarten students are given a brief introduction to the writing process. The primary goal at this age level is to encourage, motivate and interest the children in writing.

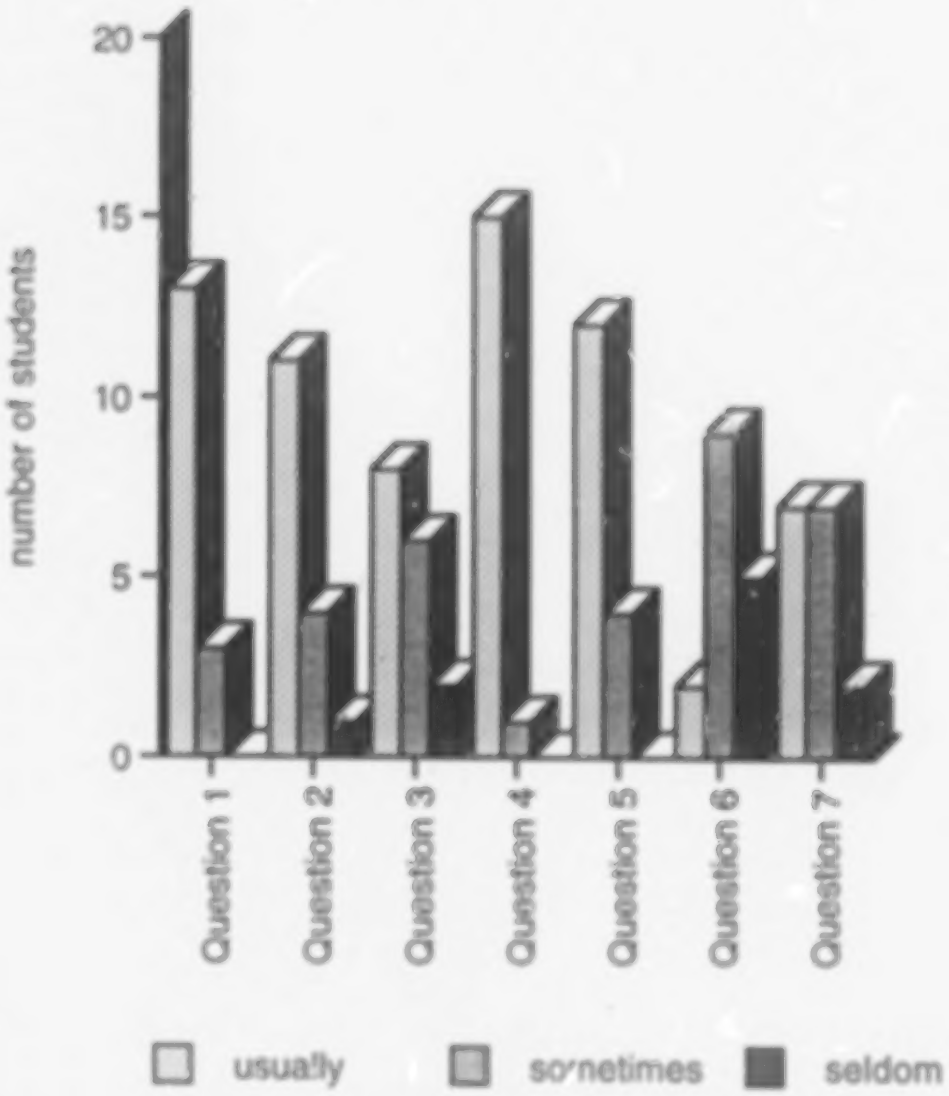

Figure 14

Post Intervention Evaluation of a Writer
Second Grade

The 16 targeted second grade students demonstrated growth in most areas of intervention instruction. Comparison of Figure 2 to Figure 14, indicate that the majority of the students in this classroom improved in their writing skills and grew in their techniques for self expression. The post writing evaluation showed student growth in all areas but two.

The data for question 2, indicated that the number or students using an increased amount of detail in their work more than doubled, while the number of students who seldom used detail diminished to a third of the original number. All the students demonstrated increased awareness of detail in each other's work as well as in literature read to them. Much discussion was generated about this topic during Author's Chair and teacher read aloud of children's literature.

The data indicated an improvement in the use of writing conventions as shown in question three. The number of young authors that were more consistent in their use of end marks, capitalization and conventional spelling more than doubled in the post-intervention as compared to results in the pre-intervention writing sample. The number of children who seldom used conventions was less than half of the earlier sample. Several children still needed some support when editing for conventions during regular writing periods, but most were quite automatic in their uses.

The results in question 4, maintaining a focus in written work, indicated that this issue was not a large problem in this targeted classroom. Comparing the data from the pre intervention to the post-interventinn indicated that the students having some difficulty with the skill improved to the point that 15 of the 16 children were consistent in their focus when writing. Awareness of this skill

was also evident in the children's peer conferencing and comments when sharing at Author's Chair.

These second grade authors showed a large increase in their organization capabilities when writing stories. The use of a clear beginning, a middle and an end was evident in more than twice the number of children in the post-intervention sample. Although the sample was a narrative prompt, the organizational improvement was evident in expository pieces written during Workshop times as well. The researcher attributed this growth to the use of organizers and the time spent in mini lessons on these topics.

Two areas of intervention did not show the hoped for gains. The first area indicated in question 6 was in the use of expressive vocabulary. Two students showed an increased use of unusual words on the post-intervention sample, up from zero on the pre-intervention. Nine of the students showed only occasional use of unusual words. It was disappointing to the researcher, that five showed no growth at all in this area.

A majority in this targeted classroom, 15 of the students, come from native English speaking advantaged homes, the data indicated that there was little improvement in their written vocabulary. Most use colorful words in their spoken vocabulary quite adeptly! Perhaps there is a certain reluctance to attempt to spell words not commonly used in their writing.

The other area which did not show major growth was that of the use of the writing process. The data in question 7 of the post-intervention writing sample indicated that seven students showed several incidence of editing or revision to improve their piece. Another group of seven students showed a few incidence of self corrections, while two showed no effort in this direction. Perhaps there was a lack of time due to the time limit imposed on the final

sample. This reluctance to change written work was exhibited by a few students in Writer's Workshop sessions and during peer conferencing. There may be a link between the ability to continue to work on a piece after the author thinks it is finished and maturity of the student. The researcher noted this reluctance was greatest among those students who had difficulty with the physical act of writing or spelling.

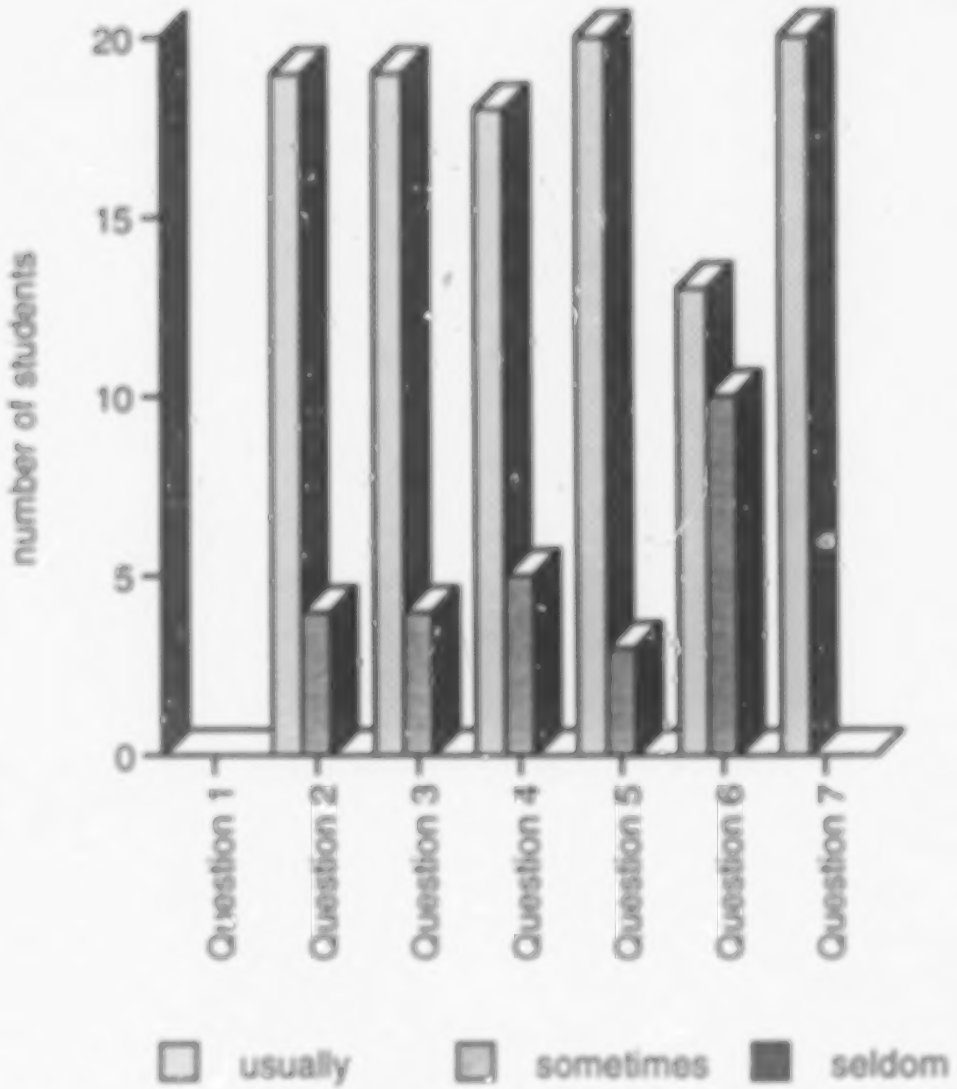

Figure 15

Post Intervention Evaluation of a Writer
Fourth Grade

The post-intervention writing prompt was administered to the original targeted fourth graders (Appendix Z). The stories were evaluated by the same rubric used in the baseline sample (Appendix B). Comparing and analyzing data from Figures 3 and 15 indicate that the students written expression has improved.

Question number 2 was used to evaluate detail. In Figure 3 there were not any children that had detail in their writing. After the intervention period, 19 out of 23 students used detail in stories (Figure 15). Figure 3 reported that many students rarely used conventions. In the post evaluation prompt 19 of the 23 targeted students used conventions on a regular basis (Figure 15).

Question number 4 was used to assess focus in writing. Baseline results showed that only one child stayed on the topic when writing (Figure 3). In figure 15, 18 out of 23 students were focused in writing.

Sequence was measured in question number 5. In the beginning of the year students rarely had a beginning, a middle, or an end in their stories (Figure 3). The results from figure 15 indicates that 20 out of 23 students wrote in sequential order.

Question number 6 evaluated the use of expressive vocabulary. In figure 3 hardly any students would use words instead of said when writing conversation. After the intervention period, 13 out of 23 children were using other words for said (Figure 15)

Question number 7 assessed the appropriate use of the writing process. Baseline data showed that only two students started the writing process right away. The other children experienced difficulties starting a story (Figure 3). In figure 15, 100 percent of the targeted fourth graders were able to start the writing process right away.

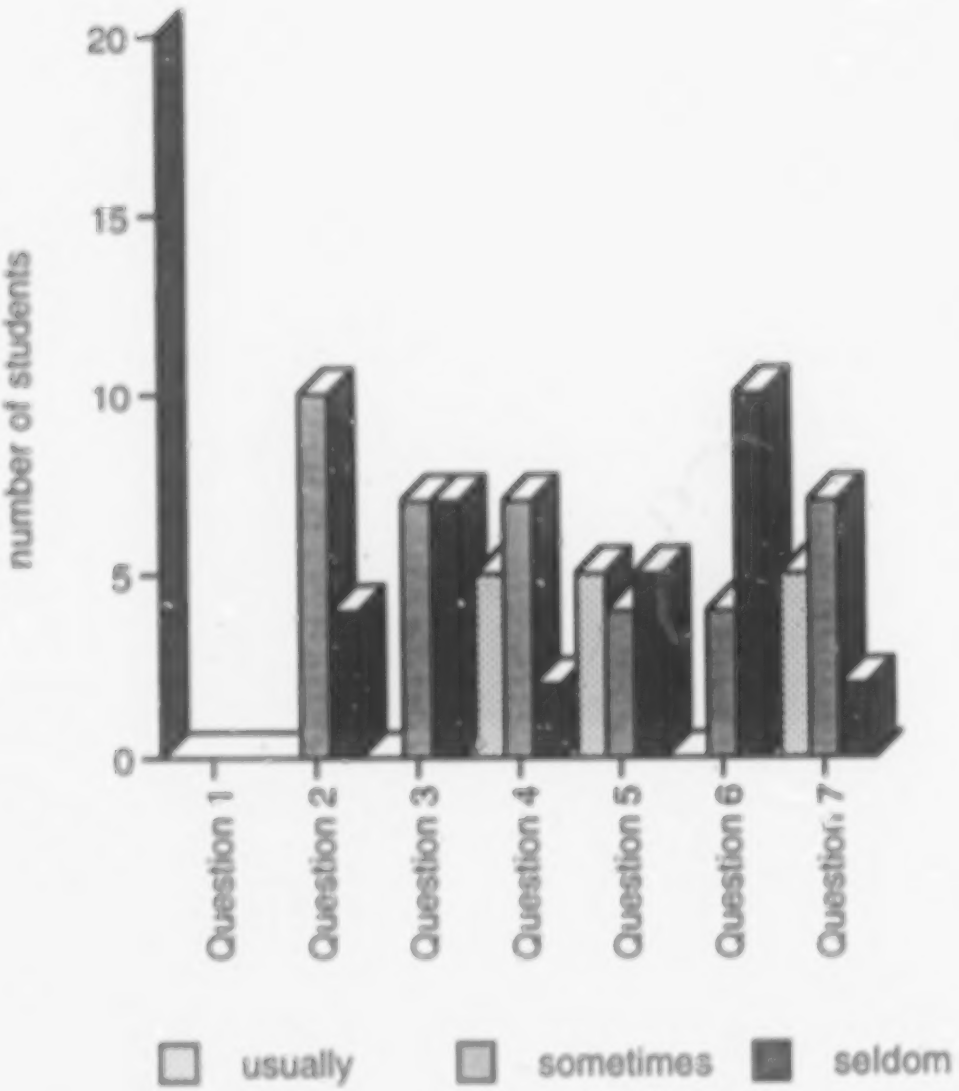

Figure 16

Post Intervention Evaluation of a Writer
Special Education High School

The EMH (Educable Mentally Handicapped) students are relatively low functioning. Their exposure to the writing process had been minimal before being introduced to Writer's Workshop. The results of the post intervention evaluation represented in Figure 16, demonstrated mixed results.

The data for question 2 shows a great improvement in the use of detail by students who previously seldom used detail. Exposure to Writer's Workshop appears to have made a difference in this group. Use of conventions appears not to have improved. This group had displayed poor use of these conventions prior to the intervention. This problem has been long standing and will require more extensive drilling to become natural to them. The data for question 4 indicated that the students have shown a marked improvement. The students seemed to have begun to understand the concept of focus. This concept had been a difficult one for these students to master. They had given little attention, prior to Writers' Workshop, to focusing their writing on one topic.

Results from question 5 were mixed. Being able to stay on one topic and have a clear beginning, middle and end was something none of the students could accomplish prior to the intervention with Writer's Workshop. Post intervention there were some students who usually had a beginning, a middle and an end in their writing. A greater number of students sometimes had a beginning, a middle and an end in their writing. This was accomplished with a concomitant decrease in the number of students in the seldom category. The data for question 6 had to do with the use of expressive language and showed no real change. Exposure to a broader range of words, their meanings and usage, was not yet demonstrating any significant change in the students writing. The results of the post intervention data for question 7 were greatly improved for most of these students. They appeared to be more conscious of how the writing

process works and began to show results which indicated a shift from sometimes to usually and a shift from seldom to sometimes.

The post intervention student attitudinal questionnaire data is shown in graphs number 17 through 20b. In this questionnaire the students were asked the following questions. In the graphs shown on the subsequent pages, the following questions were used and remain constant for the post intervention discussion of the questionnaire:

1. Do you like to write?
2. Do you like to write with someone?
3. Do you like to illustrate your writing?
4. Do you like to share what you write about yourself?
5. Do you like to write about yourself?
6. Do you like to listen to others when they share their stories?
7. Do you like to write at home?
8. What do you write at home?

These were the same questions used in the questionnaire prior to the intervention.

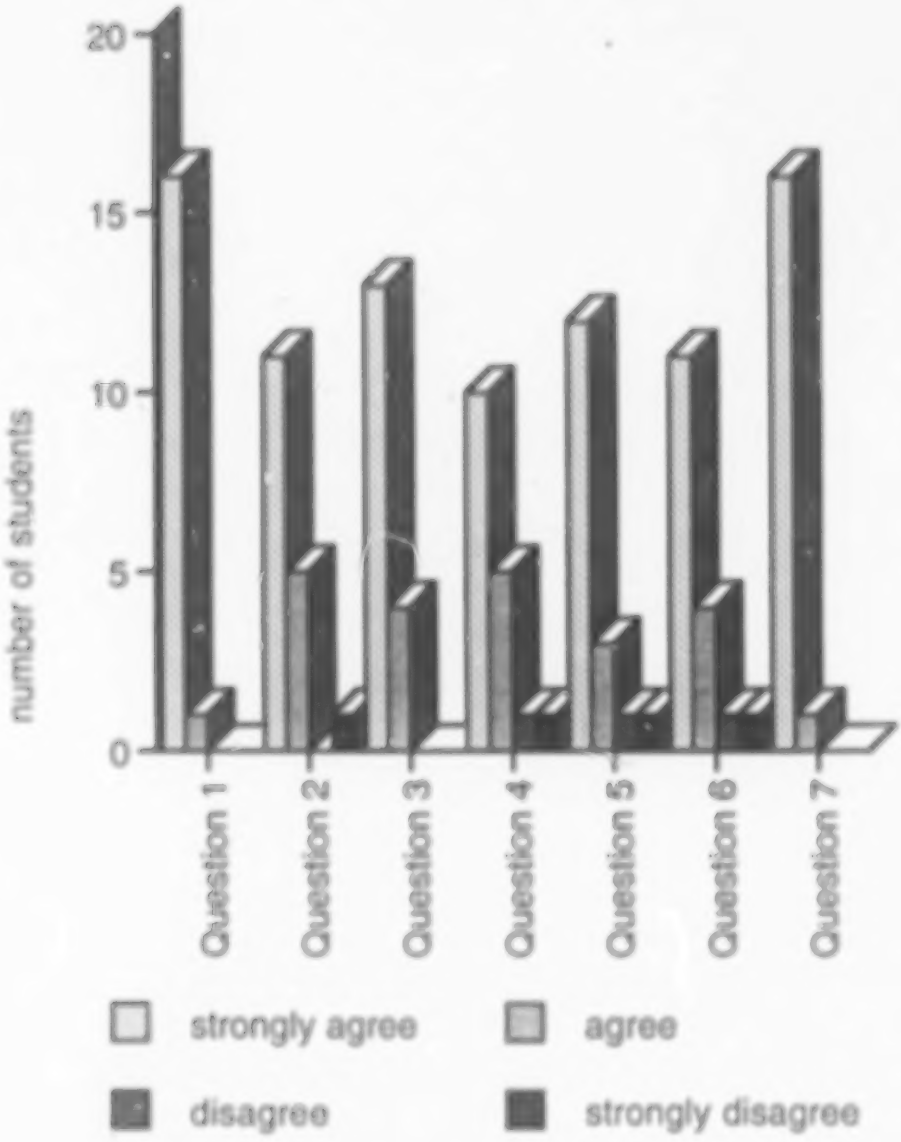

Figure 17

Post Intervention Student Questionnaire
Kindergarten

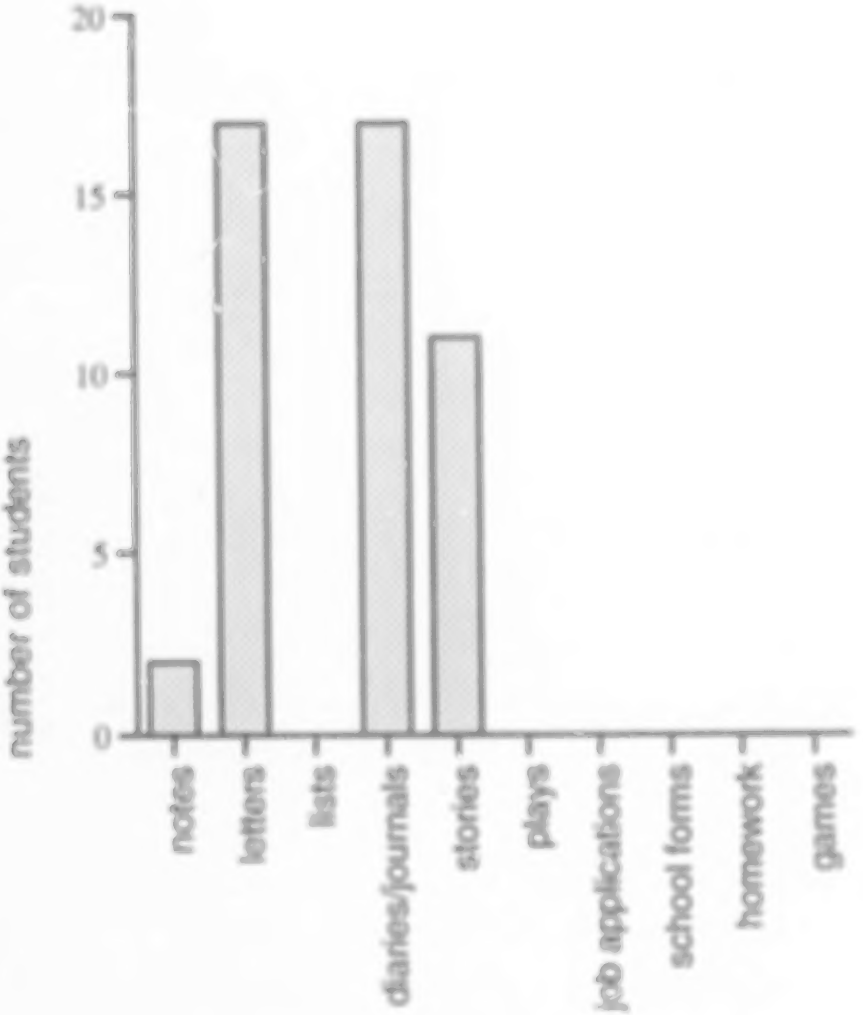

Figure 17b
Post Intervention Question 8
Kindergarten

Comparing the pre-intervention student questionnaire (Figure 5) to the post-intervention student questionnaire (Figure 17) the results remain similar for the targeted kindergarten students. Overall most of the students enjoy expressing themselves on paper and dictating words to describe their pictures. The student questionnaire was given individually with the teacher asking the questions and the student responding to the question asked.

In response to question 1, 16 students out of 17 said they strongly agreed to the statement, "I like to write." In comparison to the previous student questionnaire 13 students strongly agreed. The data indicates that the students had a definite positive increase in their feelings toward writing.

The results of question number 2, showed 11 students strongly agreed, five students agreed and one student strongly disagreed. Compared to the pre-intervention questionnaire, the students had remained positive in their opinion in response to the statement "I like to write with someone" (Figure 5).

The data for question 3 in both Figure 5 and Figure 17, indicated 13 out of 17 students strongly agreed toward illustrating or drawing their writing. In addition three and four students agreed on this question in both questionnaires. This indicated that the targeted kindergarten students understood and practiced their writing through illustrations and dictations.

The results from question 5, "I like to share what I write about me," in the post-intervention were very different, 10 students strongly agreed, five students agreed, one student disagreed and one student strongly disagreed. In the pre-intervention 15 out of 17 students strongly agreed and two agreed. There was a definite shift toward the negative. It is interesting to note that obviously some students found sharing their writing more difficult to do as they became more proficient, but there is no explanation as to why.

Response to question 5, "I like to write about me," in both the pre and post-intervention was almost the same.

The data from the targeted kindergarten class indicated a much different response to question 7 in the post-intervention questionnaire. In Figure 5, 14 out of 17 students responded to strongly agree. That number decreased to 11 out of 17 students who responded to strongly agree. It was evident that the students preferred to talk and work on their own stories rather than listen to others share theirs.

The results for question 7 were exactly the same in both questionnaires. The data from both were 16 out of 17 students strongly agreed that they liked to write at home. One student agreed to this question. The data from both show the positive motivation that these students had when writing at home.

Question 8 asked students to tell what type of writing they were familiar with and practice. In Figure 5b, three children responded to writing notes. Compared to responses in Figure 17b, only two children said they wrote notes.

When the students were asked about writing letter, they interpreted this as literally writing letters of the alphabet. In the the pre-intervention questionnaire, 11 out of 17 students responded that they did write letters. The results of the post-intervention questionnaire, showed that 17 out of 17 students indicated that they wrote letters. As the students learned and practiced the letters of the alphabet, they showed growth and understanding of the letters.

Comparing Figure 5b to Figure 17b, students responded differently to writing stories. The data showed 15 out of 17 students responded to story writing in the pre intervention questionnaire, while the data in Figure 17b showed a decrease. Only 11 out of 17 students responded positively to story

writing. It appeared that some of the children lost interest as time went on in the Workshop model, and the students that felt successful continued to write.

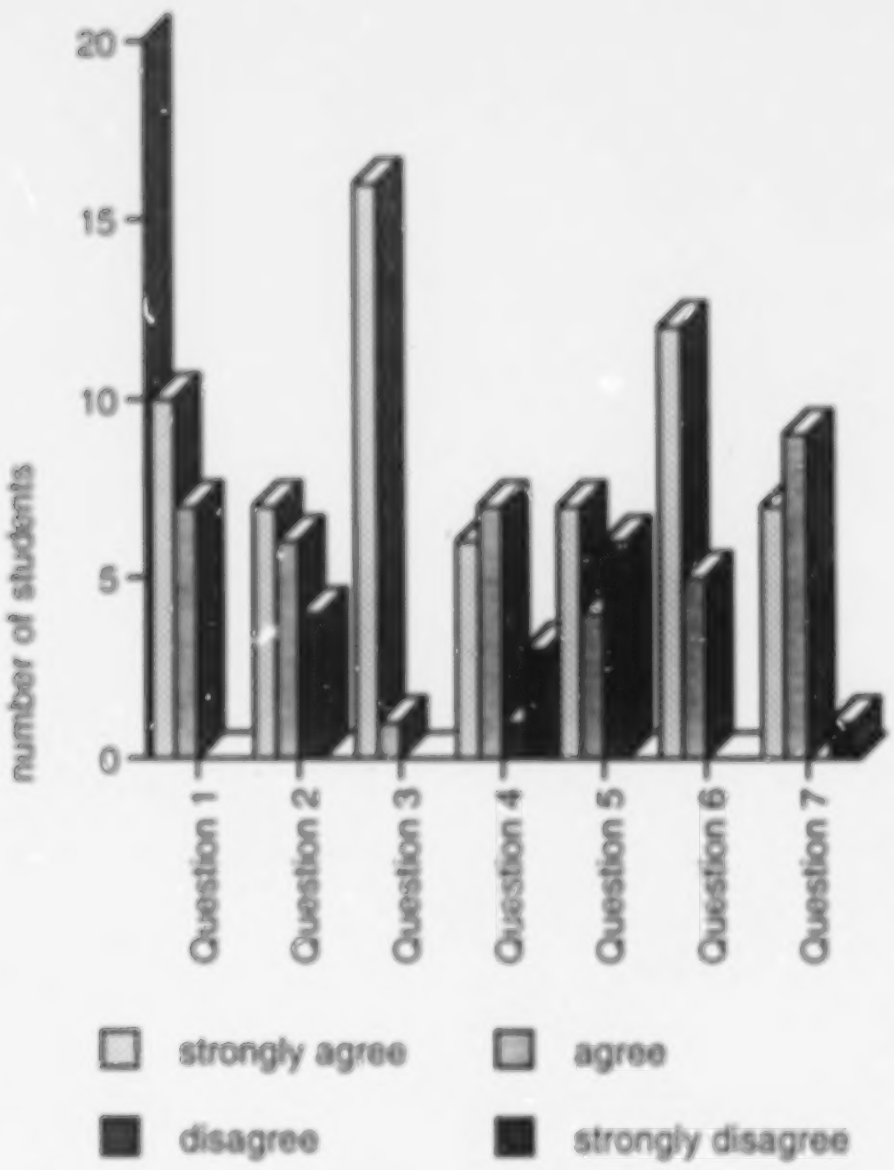

Figure 18

Post Intervention Student Questionnaire
Second Grade

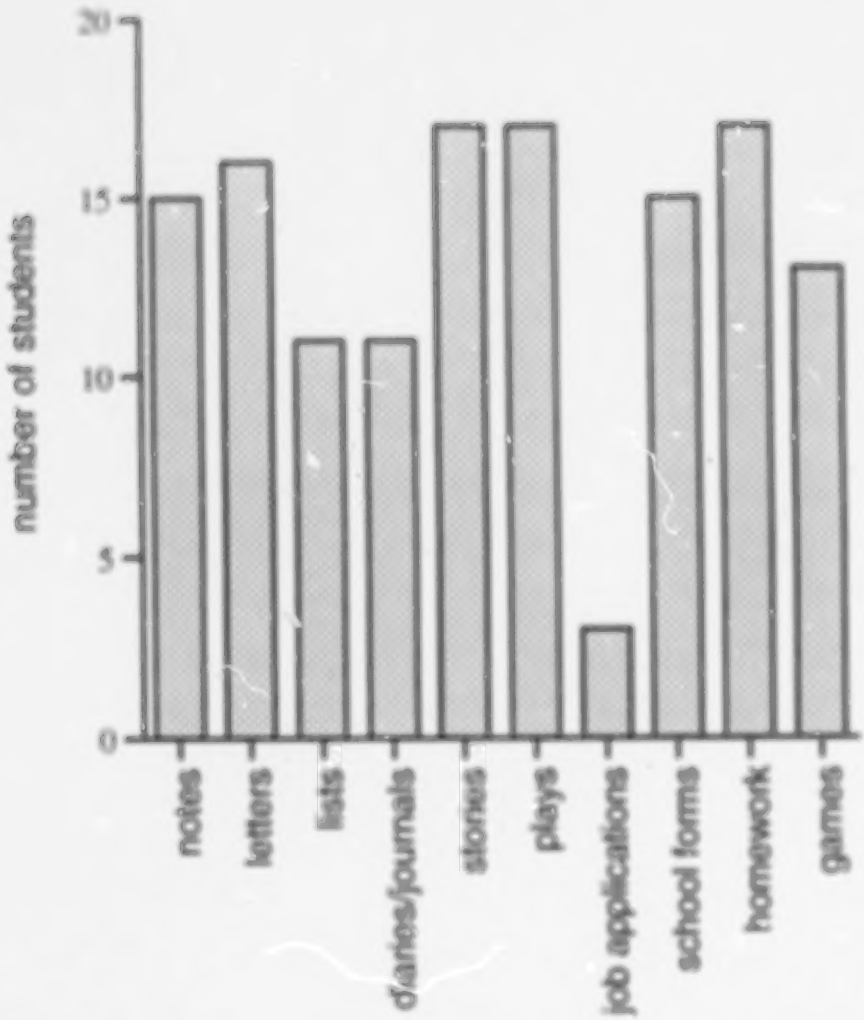

Figure 18b

Post Intervention Question 8
Second Grade

The 16 children in the targeted second grade classroom were administered a post-intervention writing attitude questionnaire, as seen in Figure 18. There were some changes in attitude noted when compared with the results of the pre-intervention questionnaire shown in Figure 6 and Figure 6b.

In question 1 of the post-intervention questionnaire, all the students strongly agreed or agreed that they enjoy writing. Previously there were two students who indicated disagreement to this question. Most children exhibited enjoyment during Workshop times and participated in all activities. A few students had difficulty with the workshop process at the beginning of the intervention, finding topics or things to say. All the students showed improvement in these areas.

The data indicated that students desire to write with a partner had declined, which was a surprise to the researcher. Question 2 showed 13 students responded they would write with someone else only occasionally. The earlier questionnaire results showed 13 students who preferred to write with a partner. This group of second graders appeared to be maturing as writers and perhaps did not need to support of someone else.

The data in question 3 indicated that all the students continued to enjoy illustrating stories. There was not appreciable change in their attitude. Illustrations were used both for story planning and enhancement.

The writing and sharing of personal stories became less attractive to the students during the intervention, as seen by the data in questions 4 and 5. While most writers early on indicated liking to write about themselves and sharing their stories, 15 students in the agree area, one in the disagree area for question 4, and there were 12 students in the agree and four in the disagree for question 5, the results in the post-intervention questionnaire for questions 4 and

5 show a decrease in this area. In question 4, 13 students remained in the agree area and 3 moved to disagree, while 5 students moved to disagree in question 5 of the post-intervention questionnaire. The children were showing more variety in their topic selection, which may account for their waning interest in writing about themselves. A difference in family activity experiences may also have influenced this change.

In question 6, all the children indicated a strong enjoyment in listening to the works of others. There was no change in this attitude from the pre- to the post-intervention questionnaire. The real pleasure these children received in listening and commenting was apparent in every Author's Chair session.

Question 7, Figure 18, addressed the students' attitude about writing at home. In both questionnaires, the vast majority of children agreed that they liked to write at home. The pre-intervention data did indicate that three children disagreed, while post-intervention data indicated the number disagreeing had decreased to one.

Variety in writing was observed both in the types of writing listed in the surveys and in topics used during the intervention period. The questionnaires showed many forms of writing were attempted, even job applications at the age of seven! All forms of written communication were continued through the intervention period, though job application forms diminished considerably. Researcher observation and lists of topics attempted by the children showed increasing variety and sophistication.

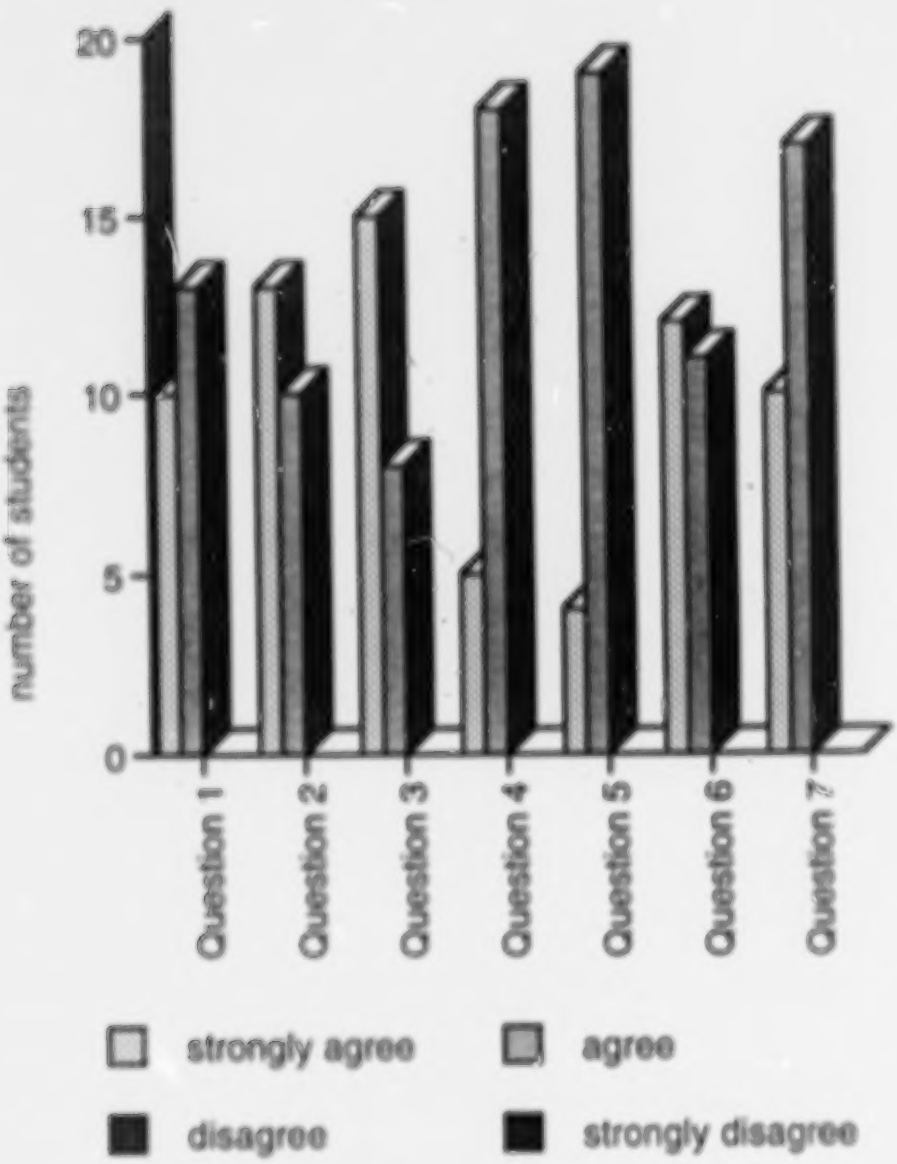

Figure 19

Post Intervention Student Questionnaire
Fourth Grade

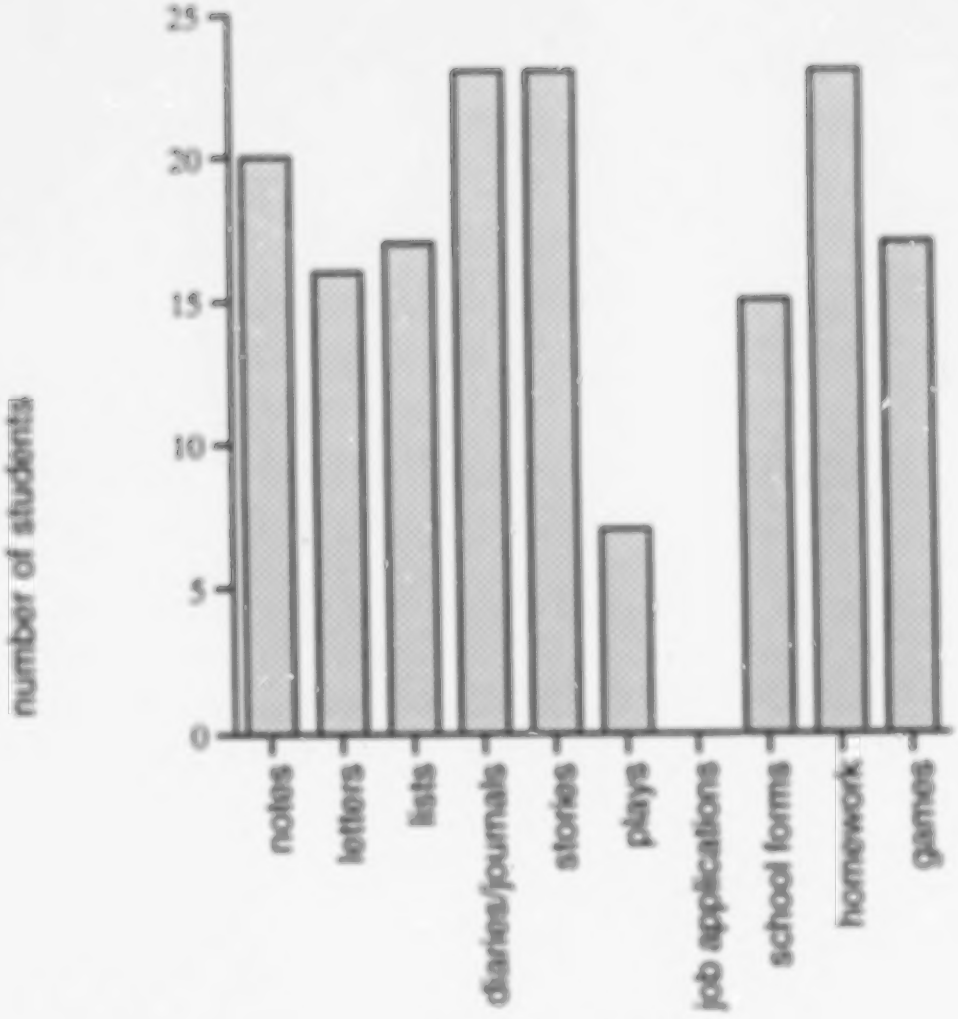

Figure 19b

Post Intervention Question 8
Fourth Grade

Twenty-three students in fourth grade were requested to complete a post-intervention writing attitude questionnaire. Comparisons of Figure 7 and Figure 19 indicated an increased appreciation of the different components of the Writer's Workshop model.

In question 1 all students reported that they like to write (Figure 19). Nine percent of the children pre-intervention indicated that they did not enjoy writing (Figure 7). The data from question 2 indicated that all the students like to write with a classmate. In response to the same question on the pre-intervention questionnaire, 14 percent of the fourth graders preferred to write alone.

Question 3 asked children if they enjoyed illustrating written work. Figure 19 indicates that students like to draw. According to Figure 7, 14 percent of children did not enjoy this activity.

In questions 4 and 5 students were asked if they liked to write and share personal stories. Baseline results from the pre-intervention questionnaire indicated that 82 percent of the students did not like to write about themselves and that 50 percent preferred not to share this type of writing (Figure 7). Data from the post-intervention questionnaire indicated that every student enjoyed these activities.

In response to question 6 the pre-intervention data indicated that five percent of the targeted class did not like to listen to others when they shared stories (Figure 7). The post-intervention data to the same question indicated that most children like to hear their classmates share writing (Figure 19).

Question 7 wanted to know if children liked to write at home. In the beginning of the school year about one-fourth of the class responded negatively to this question (Figure 7). Figure 19 indicated that the fourth grade students were involved in exploring many genres of written language. The types of

writing that have increased are notes, list, journals, school forms and games. The trend in these types of writings may be attributed to the fourth grade curriculum. Note writing was increased because the children took notes for research during workshop periods. The increase of lists is probably because children used an assignment notebook in fourth grade. Journal and game writing are components of the math and science programs. Fourth graders have been responsible for filling out extra curricular forms since the beginning of the school year. Letter, stories, plays and homework are similar from the fall to the spring (Figure 7b and Figure 19b).

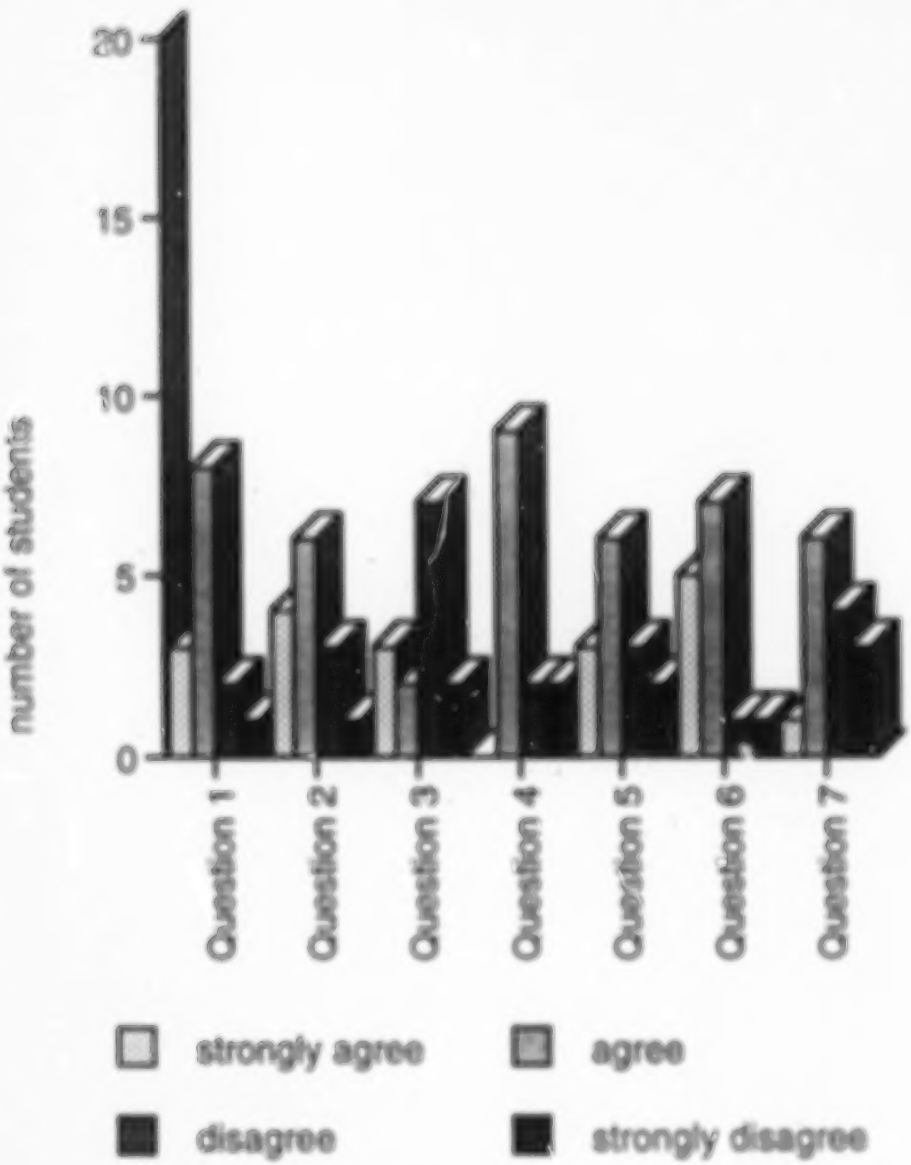

Figure 20

Post Intervention Student Questionnaire
EMH High School

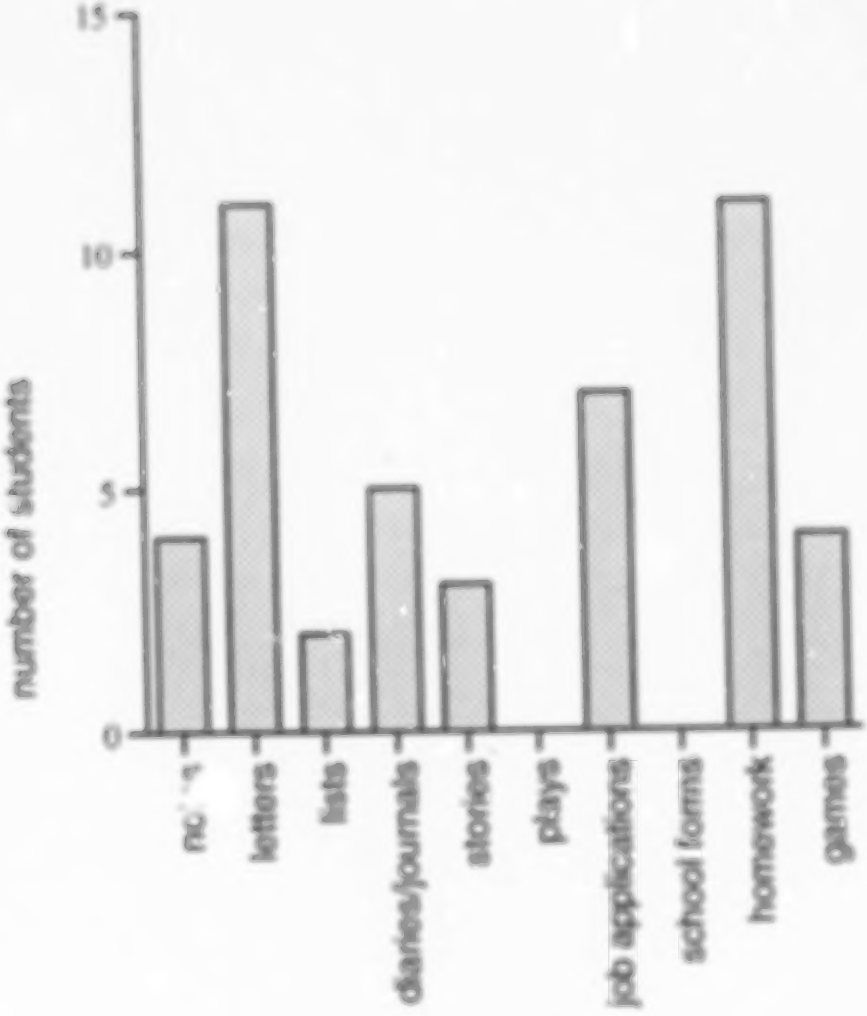

Figure 20b
Post Intervention Question 8
EMH High School

Figure 20 graphically represents data, which will be summarized in a brief point by point description of the data for question 1 through 8. Regarding the group of high school students surveyed in the post intervention student evaluation in Figure 20, question number 1. Over half of those surveyed post intervention indicated by their responses that they enjoy the writing process. In response to question number 2, the strongly disagree group remained stable. In the group that changed the movement of students from disagree to agree and a steep decrease from strongly agree to agree was seen. This seems to show a shift to the center of the values. Many students enjoyed the support and feedback from cooperatively working with other students. They relished their ability to gain strength and confidence in the writing experience.

Though there were some students who agreed with question number 3 in the pre-Writer's Workshop evaluation (Figure 8) there was no one who strongly agreed. This changed in the post evaluation questionnaire. More students strongly agreed that they liked to illustrate their writing.

There were, in the case of question number 4, a combined total of five students in the agree and strongly agree categories pre-intervention. Post intervention, there were no strongly agrees. There were nine agrees, bringing the total of strongly agree and agree categories to nine. This improvement was accomplished by a redistribution of the students from the disagree and strongly disagree categories, to a more positive position. Sharing about themselves remained a strong choice for these students to write about. Unfortunately, how much to risk sharing still remained a disturbing issue for these students.

There was an increase in the strongly agree category with a decrease in the agree category for question number 5, but a net gain in the strongly agree

and agree category combination. The disagree group had a minor decrease, while the strongly disagree remained stable. In an overview there was a slight positive shift.

In response to question number 6, the strongly disagree and disagree groups remained stable, while the agree group decreased causing an increase in the strongly agree group. As the students stories took on more substance and continuity, the group as a whole enjoyed listening to each others' stories.

The response to question number 7 showed the strongly agree group decreased in number, while the agree group increased significantly. The disagree and strongly disagree group remained stable as a negative group. It became very apparent that this group did not and would not, even when provided with the opportunity, write in the home setting. The reason why is still baffling.

The interesting feature of these post intervention questionnaires, was that the negative group appeared to remain fairly constant. One explanation may be that this group consists of the lower ability group within this class. They have experienced multiple failures and are not interested in risking future failures.

The shift in the response to question number 8, "what do you like to write at home?", was not as positive as had been hoped for initially. No one responded to writing plays either time. Letters, diaries/journals and job applications did not change. Notes, lists, and homework increased. School forms became nonexistent and games decreased somewhat.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The kindergarten researcher found Writer's Workshop to be a successful program. Students were introduced to writing and were able to experience and

practice writing. Through illustrations and dictations, students became comfortable with their own ideas and topics. Students were able to take risks and put their ideas down on paper.

The use of mini lessons helped students in kindergarten focus on communicating ideas in writing. Some students had a challenging time transferring what they learned during the mini-lesson, to using that skill in their own writing. One mini lesson was focused on the strategy of staying on one specific topic. Some children were not developmentally ready to talk about one specific idea throughout their story. Through time and practice, many students began to understand and use the idea of sticking to one specific topic.

The researcher observed that students enjoy and have interest in working in their journals. Children respected their books and liked reading previous pages they had worked on. The students also found other children's journals interesting to look at or listen to as others shared their ideas.

The kindergarten researcher considered an idea that turned out to be a very successful strategy used during the project. On a specific day students brought an item from home which was important to them. For example, on that special day, students brought their favorite stuffed animal to school. Students shared what made this animal special with their classmates. The stuffed animal was a great motivator to stimulate students to write a story using the stuffed animal as a specific character or theme.

A successful strategy was taking pictures of students while working in Writer's Workshop. They truly enjoyed seeing themselves at work. One strategy the kindergarten researcher suggests would be to record or video tape student dictations. Though tape recording and video taping were not used

during this research, the researcher believes that the impact of students hearing and seeing themselves would be very beneficial.

Overall, the kindergarten students felt successful with the writing process and have shown excitement and enthusiasm toward writing. The researcher believes that the students in this targeted kindergarten classroom have received a great beginning introduction to their writing years. Students have practiced Writer's Workshop, Author's Chair and Writing conferences to help them become successful writers.

The researcher in second grade was impressed with the growth made by all students using the Writer's Workshop / mini lesson model. The children were engaged during writing activities and wrote many pieces on a wide variety of topics. Writing techniques and skills showed improvement and increased maturity. The children appeared to enjoy Writer's Workshop sessions, especially Author's Chair and peer conferencing. The opportunity to peer conference and interact brought improved written work and appeared to increase cooperation and support among the children observable at other times as well. The researcher feels Writer's Workshop with the mini lesson components in a very viable method of assisting student authors.

Following the post writing sample and attitude questionnaire, a few ideas for further implementation arose. The researcher noted that increased use of expressive vocabulary had not risen as expected. Greater emphasis on the use of descriptive words during mini lessons, read aloud and Author's Chair may be needed. Giving descriptive words more attention during revision times should help as well. Lists of alternative words for common ones might be kept on display charts visible to children at all times. Spelling concerns may be overcome by increased use of dictionaries. Another technique would be to

have the children make a list of common words they wish to change and help from peer or adults. A question (issue) arose in the researcher's mind for further study. Although this second grade group was competent and with few observable limitations, such as an ESL component, why were they resistant and uncooperative to revising and editing? Was more revision and editing process time needed with adults? Was this an issue that would resolve itself with age or experience? Further examination on this issue would be needed.

A small management problem occurred with storage and organization of student writing. Folders became full and disorganized quite quickly. Perhaps a solution would be to use a folder for current pieces of work to be revised separated from stories and record sheets. A legal file folder or very large manila envelope might also solve the problem.

The Writer's Workshop with a mini lesson component will definitely become a part of the researcher's second grade program. It met both academic and social goals. The targeted children showed improved enthusiasm and competency in writing, as well as increased social skills.

The fourth grade researcher found the Writer's Workshop model to be a successful program in the classroom. The children looked forward to writing periods. Some students even asked to do Writer's Workshop during free choice time or indoor recess.

Using file folders that the children designed worked well to hold their written work. The children enjoyed drawing pictures on the folders and personalizing them. It was a good idea to laminate them so the writing folders last the entire school year. Using spiral notebooks to keep first draft stories in helped minimize the loss of papers. An alternative suggestion might be to use expandable file folders.

Topic sheets that had the children brainstorm different stories to write about during the year helped them when they had finished a piece of writing and needed to start another story (Appendix K). The teacher felt that these sheets helped the students to write about a variety of topics. A suggestion would be to have the children redo their topic sheets in the middle of the school year. This could be a way to evaluate the topics that they had written about and bring in new ideas at the same time. It might be a good idea to do this in January as a start to the New Year.

The researcher thought that the self reflection sheets were valuable to use in fourth grade (Appendix L). Students felt important meeting individually with the teacher to discuss their written work. The conferences occurred once a month. A recommendation would be to have two meetings a month because this format showed children that the teacher is really interested in their writing.

Mini lessons on elaboration were important in fourth grade. The researcher felt that when children added more details to written pieces their stories became more interesting to listen to during the Author's Chair time. The researcher suggests that children work in partners to help each other during this process. Another idea would be to video tape Author's Chair. The children might enjoy watching themselves on television.

The researcher further suggests using mini lessons for research skills. Many students in fourth grade were interested in exploring expository writing. The researcher felt these lesson helped children organize their writing . A recommendation would be to have these lessons in the school library so the pupils would have access to a variety of reference materials as part of the lesson.

The majority of children appeared to anticipate and enjoy peer editing time. The instructor found that an audience is frequently a motivating factor for aspiring authors. Many children in the targeted class wanted to write stories with friends. The researcher recommends that time be provided for peer editing and collaborative writing.

A final suggestion from this researcher is to have children compose first draft pieces using a word processor. The fourth grade classroom only had one computer. The researcher feels that the editing and revision processes would be easier and less negative for the children if their stories were on the computer.

The high school researcher found that the Writer's Workshop model with the mini lesson component was successful for this population. The students' quality of writing was constantly improving throughout the intervention period.

Pizza boxes were used as portfolios for this group. The students were encouraged to decorate and personalize them in any manner they chose. The size was beneficial because it was able to hold a large amount of material safe and neat.

The researcher suggests going to local restaurant to procure the boxes. It is important to acknowledge their support by sending a thank you letter on school stationary and by publishing their support and cooperation to school staff and parents.

Another suggestion for a portfolio might be the large portfolio folders (envelopes) available at artist supply stores. Finally, adding portfolio to school supply lists might produce some interesting container for students to use.

Mini lesson techniques for the writing process were very successful with this group because they were presented in a short time frame and held the

group's attention enabling more learning to take place. It is important to present mini lessons in a sequential order from the most basic concept to ensure that the writing process is learned (Appendices P-U). The researcher reviewed these lesson with individual students as needed.

An alternative suggestion for review would be to have the students work in cooperative groups on a technique. For example the leader of the group would be responsible for reteaching a lesson on paragraph structure. Each group member would write a paragraph from an agreed upon prompt, i.e.: picture, stem starter, research topic or topic of own choice. Then the leader would use a check list to evaluate that all component of a paragraph were present.

The use of prompts for this group was most helpful and reduced the stress of creating a story on their own. This truly helped them focus on the writing process and not just on what to write. A suggestion would be to have a "bank" of story starters ideas for any student to choose from during the Writer's Workshop period. This would make Author's Chair or sharing time more interesting since they would be reading many different types of stories.

Composition books were well received by this high school group and the researcher would highly recommend their continued use. The reasons for their success may be varied. This was a new experience for most of this group and the books were a novel idea. Their writing stayed in one place and was lost much less. The personalized aspect of this experience had to be addressed as well. The stories written in them were their own reactions not just another piece of blank notebook paper. The researcher felt that this also helped to build their self esteem and increase their motivation to write. The researcher would like to

note that these students often took their composition books with them to other classes.

A final recommendation that would be beneficial for a high school EMH classroom would be to try to interact with your co-professionals at the lower grades to understand what they do to expose this group to writing and try to encourage them to use the Writer's Workshop model with this population at an earlier time so they can experience more success sooner. By the time these EMH students reach the high school, they are very reluctant to write freely. Starting Writer's Workshop for this group at the elementary level would provide them with basic writing instruction that would be received at a more relaxed comfort level. The language experience approach in non-threatening and comfortable for younger students to master.

The targeted high school group showed no improvement in their ability to select a topic but when presented with a specific topic could mechanically fulfill structural improvements in their writing. This group was difficult to work with. The researcher did not see as much improvement as had been originally projected. This group has been subjected to multiple failures in the school setting and are reluctant to take any risks in the classroom.

This group of researchers interviewed parents and students for baseline data. It might be beneficial to survey colleagues on the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing. Their responses would be helpful to address the choice of specific mini lesson topics.

Some additional follow up research might be to create a longitudinal study of the targeted students in subsequent years. This study should address both the quality of written language used by students and their attitudes toward writing.

The data from this study comes from a small but varied student population with a broad age range and diverse levels of writing experience. The Writer's Workshop model demonstrated possible effects for all populations, but some effects varied with the ability level of the students.

Action research is beneficial because researchers are able to examine and apply educational theories and analyze the results in an organized manner. One drawback to this research project is that it was done over a short time period. The researchers spend one school year with the targeted students and the implementation needs to be done during this specific time period. A longitudinal study as previously mentioned would allow for further results.

The researchers found it valuable to conduct this study as a collaborative group. It was beneficial to work with teachers at different grade levels. It helped the researchers to see the effects of a targeted strategy on children of various levels. The examination of the question of the quality and variety in children's writing was seen by researchers in different settings, which helped to broaden the individual researcher's perspective.

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Appendices

Appendix A

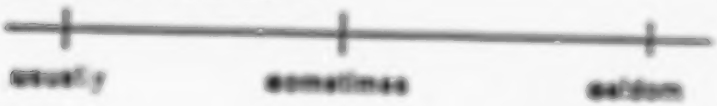
Pre-Writing Sample

Think about something that has happened to you and tell why you remember it.

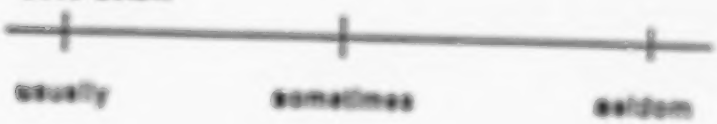
Appendix B

Evaluation of a Writer

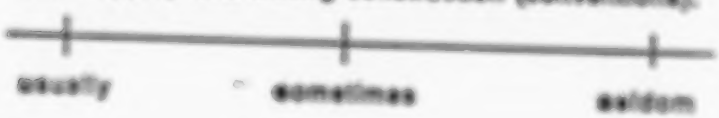
1. Uses a variety of topics.



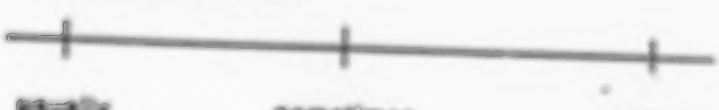
2. Uses detail.



3. Uses appropriate writing construction (conventions).



4. The writer has a focus.



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6. Organized and has a beginning, middle and end.

usually sometimes seldom

8. Uses expressive vocabulary. (Instead of "said" will write screamed, yelled or told, etc.)

usually sometimes seldom

7. Appropriate use of the writing process.

usually sometimes seldom

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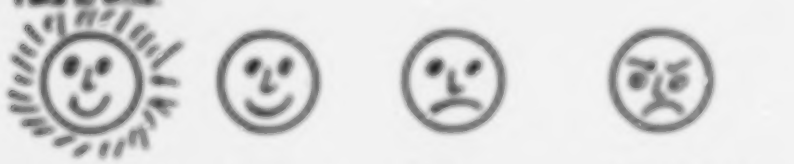
Appendix C

Student Questionnaire

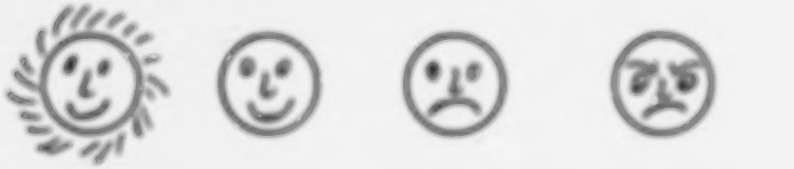
NAME _____

1. I like to write.



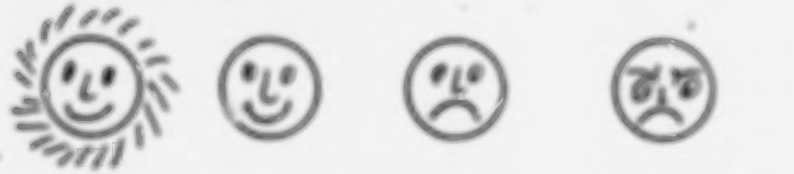
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

2. I like to write with someone.



strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

3. I like to illustrate (draw) my writing.



strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

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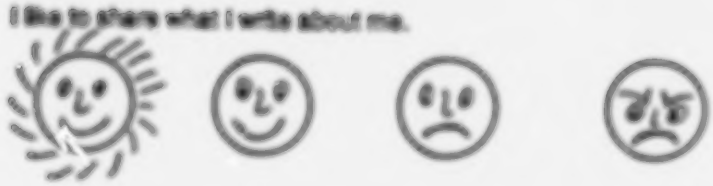
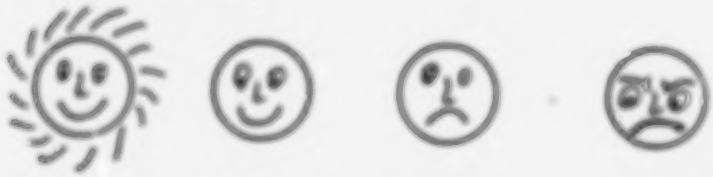
4. I like to share what I write about me.



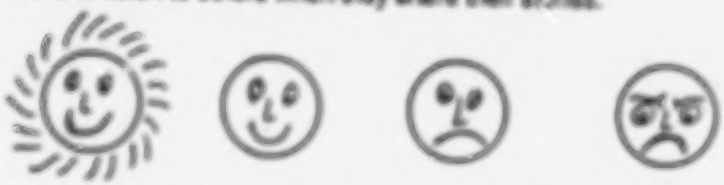
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

5. I like to write about me.



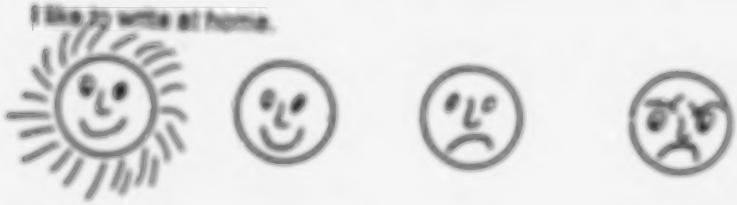
strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

6. I like to listen to others when they share their stories.



strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

7. I like to write at home.



strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Circle what you write.

notes

letters

lists

diaries / journals

stories

plays

job applications

school forms

homework

games

Parent Survey

1. What kind of leisure time activities does your child participate in ?

   Check all that are appropriate.

   Watch television

   Play video games

   Computer

   Sports

   Religious classes

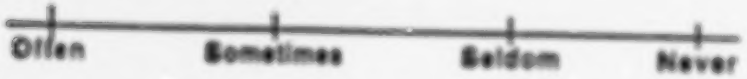
   Lessons

   Music Art Dance

   Other_____

2. How often does your child write at home?

   Please circle one.



3. When your child writes at home what does he or she write?

Please check which apply.

Notes

Letters

Lists

Diaries / Journals

Stories

Plays

Job Applications

School Forms

Homework

Games

Appendix E

September 11, 1995

Dear Parents,

We will be focusing on writing this whole school year. It would be most helpful if you could fill out this survey pertaining to your child's writing experiences at home. The children are very excited about writing and we are looking forward to a great school year! Please return the survey as soon as possible. It is not necessary to put your name on the survey. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Debbie Letaso

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Durante este año escolar vamos ha poner enfacis a 10. escrituva y composicion. Nos ayudaria mucho si Ud llena este cuestionario acevca de las experiencias que su niño ha tenido. Ellos están muy entuciasmados con la idea, esperamos tener mucho exito. Retorne el cuestionario lo mas pronto posible, no nesecita poner su nombre si no quiere. Gracias por su cooperacion.

Atentamente,

Debbie Letos

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Appendix F

Waukegan Public Schools

[redacted]

[redacted]

September 13, 1995

Dear Parents,

We're focusing on writing this whole school year in English 2. It would be most helpful if you could fill out this survey pertaining to your child's at home writing experiences. Excitement is already high in class and we are looking forward to a great school year.

Please return the survey as soon as possible. It is not necessary to put your name on the survey.

Thank you for all your cooperation.

Mrs. F. Page

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Appendix G

WRITER'S WORKSHOP PROCEDURES

Writer's Workshop Steps

1. Choose a topic.
2. Write a story about it.
3. Conference with a friend. (Use 3 inch voices)
4. Change the story if you need to.
5. Share your work.
   Read it at Author's Chair.
   Publish it in writing.
   Parent Publishing
   Home publishing

BE SURE YOU

Keep all your writing in your folder.

Return your folder to the box when you are finished.

Date your work.

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KEY
N- not observed
B- beginning
F- frequent use

Name _____

STUDENT PROGRESS CHART

WRITING PROCESS

Chooses topic							
Maintains focus							
Uses beginning, middle, and							
Includes detail							
Uses varied vocabulary							
Uses revision and editing skills							
Shares own writing							
Gives suggestions							
Accepts suggestions							

PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION

Uses appropriate endmarks							
Uses quotation marks							
Uses commas							
Uses capital letters							

GRAMMAR

Uses complete sentences							
Varies sentence beginnings							
Uses subject/ verb agreement							
Uses correct tense							
Uses descriptive words							

SPELLING

Uses conventional spelling for most words							
Applies spelling strategies							

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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Name_____

WRITE A STORY

Who_____

_____

wanted_____

_____

but (the problem) _____

_____

so _____

_____

then_____

_____

ending_____

_____

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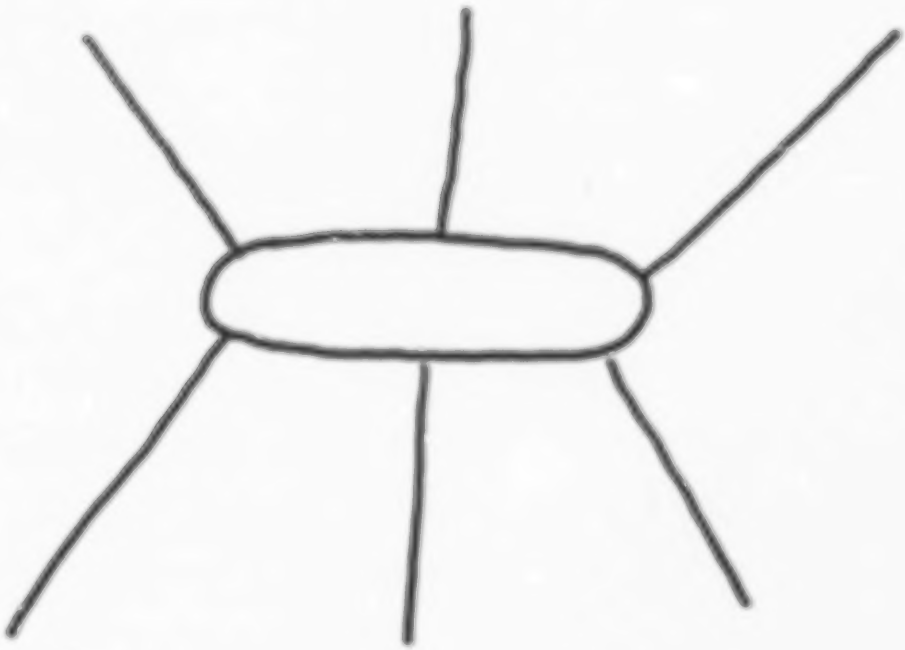
Map of What I Learned

Name _____



WRITER'S WORKSHOP IDEAS

EXPERT TOPICS

Things I know a lot about

_____

_____

_____

_____

RESEARCH TOPICS

Things I'd like to learn more about

_____

_____

_____

_____

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Things I have done or that have happened to me.

_____

_____

_____

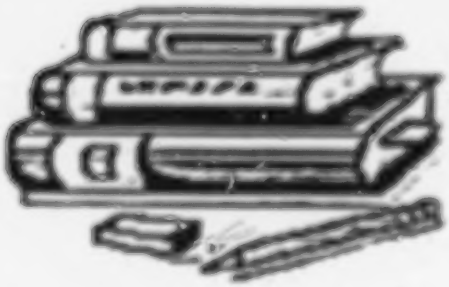
SPECIAL PEOPLE OR PETS

_____

_____

_____

_____



WRITER'S WORKSHOP IDEAS

FICTIONAL TOPICS

Ideas for made-up stories

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

LETTER TOPICS

People or places I'd like to write to for a special purpose.

_____

_____

_____

_____

ODDS AND ENDS

Poetry, persuasion, collections or any other type of writing I'd like to explore.

_____

_____

_____

STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION

NAME:_____

Date:_____

I feel good about my writing because

_____

_____

_____

_____

I can improve my writing by

_____

_____

_____

_____

REPORT FORM

INTRODUCTION
* attracts interest
* tells subject
* gives hints about what will be covered in the report

MIDDLE PARAGRAPHS

* develop the subject
* tells details

CONCLUSION

* sums up the topics that were discussed
* adds a final idea

Research Planning Sheet

Name_____

Topic_____

List information that you already know about your topic.

What questions would you like to answer through your research?

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Appendix O

Peer Editing Conference Form

Writer_____

Peer Editor_____

---

1. Is this draft neat enough to be easily read? If not how could it be made neater and easier to read?_____
_____
_____

2. List the words that you think are misspelled. If you need more space, use the back of this page._____
_____
_____

3. Is this story written in the correct order or sequence? If not, how could this problem be corrected?_____
_____
_____

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4. Are the following story elements explained in enough detail? Please make suggestions if improvements are needed.

* the main character_____
_____
_____

* the setting_____
_____
_____

*the plot or main idea_____
_____
_____

*the main conlict or problem in the story_____
_____
_____

* the solution to the conflict_____
_____
_____

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The most interesting part of the story was

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Appendix P

EXAMPLES OF SCRAMBLED SENTENCES

susan and him enjoys visiting chicago

i goes to harry sullivan elementary school

my father he will be home on thursday april 14

did yous save that magazine article called land of the midnight sun

kandy is gonna learn my to swim says queona

mrs shelly said you cant have no more paper today

Appendix Q

VERB CHOICE LIST

run

jump

sing

dance

read

dream

sleep

write

listen

walk

run

hop

excited

sad

crying

laughing

cleaning

showering

typing

skating

painting

driving

riding

sledding

cry

talk

jog

sew

climb

whine

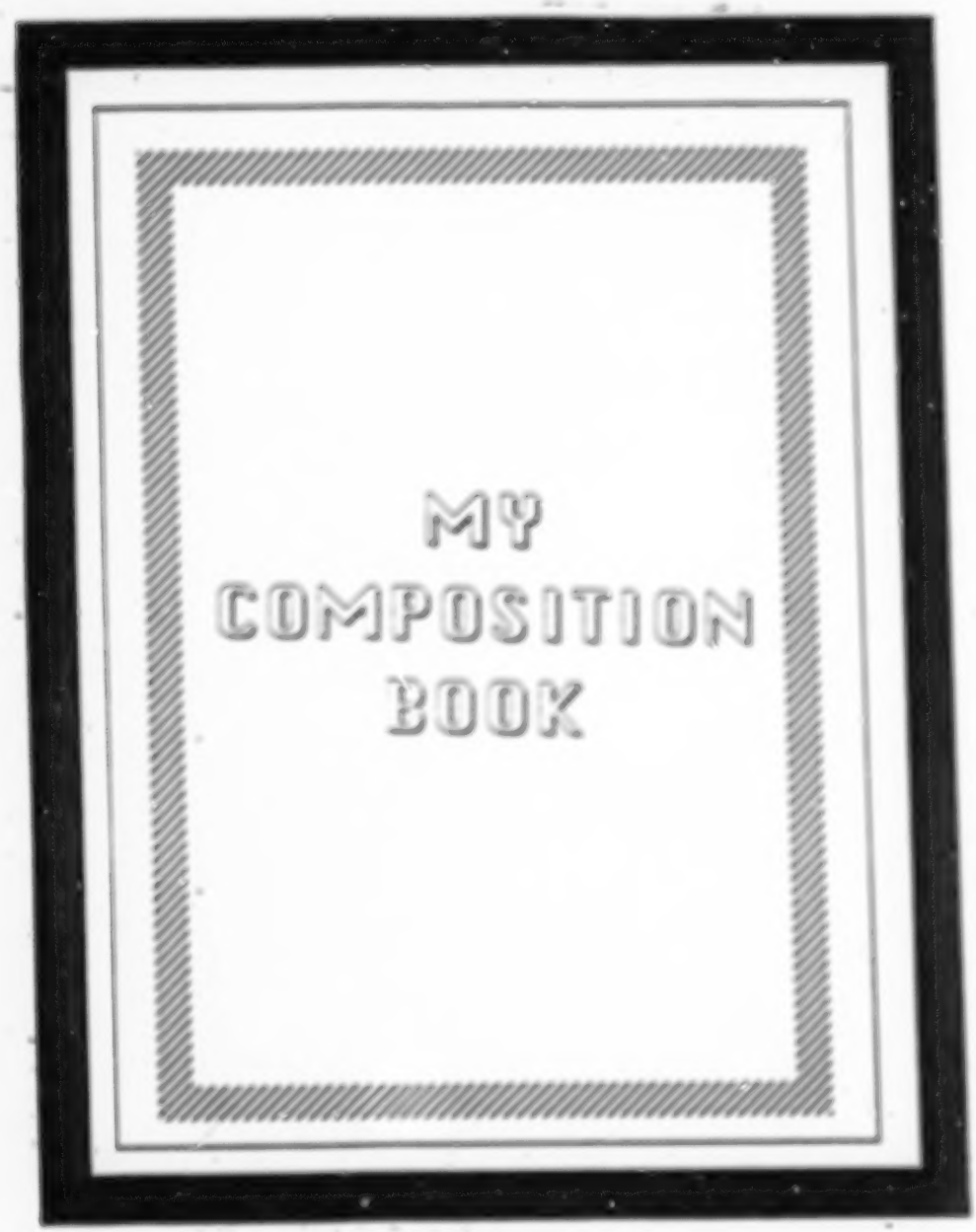
carry

Appendix B

VERB USAGE LIST

TODAY I	YESTERDAY I	I HAVE	I WILL
begin			
drink			
drive			
blow			
wear			
write			
see			
go			
am			
leave			
put			
teach			
fall			
do			
break			
think			
bring			
try			
make			
send			

Appendix S



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LESSON 7

• Read the story below. Think about the meanings of the **boldfaced** words. •

Showtime

Animals are an important part of the circus. The animal trainers work hard to put their acts together. Trainers have dangerous jobs. They work with animals that are wild and could turn on them suddenly. That is why the trainers must tame the animals.

Most trainers teach their animals to follow commands. Lion trainers work with lions, tigers, and leopards. The trainers often yell out commands and crack a whip. When they have new cats, trainers may hold a chair for protection. Much caution is used when working with the big cats. A trainer's back must never be turned toward these animals.

It is always fun to watch the circus elephants. These huge animals are very intelligent. They learn new tricks quickly. Elephants can be taught to walk and dance on their hind legs. But like other wild animals, they can be very dangerous. It is easy to forget that monkeys are wild animals. They are very cunning, and can be taught to behave just like people.

Dogs have been good companions for people throughout the ages. In many homes, dogs are considered a part of the family. But dogs can also be trained to entertain circus audiences. When commands are taught over and over using rewards, the dogs eagerly respond. Just like the other animals, when it's showtime, they *are* at their best.

• Go back to the story. Underline the words or sentences that give you a clue to the meaning of each **boldfaced** word. •

Taken from Vocabulary Connections, A Content Area Approach Level C, Steck-Vaughn, 1988.

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Using Context

Meanings for the vocabulary words are given below. Go back to the story and read each sentence that has a vocabulary word. If you still cannot tell the meaning, look for clues in the sentences that come before and after the one with the vocabulary word. Write each word in front of its meaning.

trainers	companions	caution	tame
dangerous	protection	cunning	respond
commands	intelligent		

1. _____: not safe
2. _____: people who teach animals
3. _____: great care; interest in safety
4. _____: act of being kept from harm
5. _____: clever
6. _____: to act or to answer
7. _____: those who go along and keep others company; friends
8. _____: to make a wild animal gentle and teach it how to obey
9. _____: signals or orders
10. _____: smart

Name two commands you might give a dog.

_____ _____

The Baby Sitter

sometimes (some times), Kay,
baby-sits, phone (fone), awhile
(a while), something (some thing),
held, cry (cry), seemed (seemd), eight (ate)

Sometimes Kay baby-sits for Mrs. Mason. She lives near the Masons. Mrs. Mason likes to have Kay baby-sit with David. She knows that Kay will look after him very well. She will not go to sleep.

One evening, Mr. and Mrs. Mason were going to have dinner at a hotel. Then they were going to a show. Mrs. Mason asked Kay to come at five o clock.

Mrs. Mason showed Kay what to give the baby to eat. She gave Kay a paper with the phone number of the hotel and the place of the show. She gave her the number of the family doctor. Then the Masons put on their coats and left.

David liked Kay. He liked to play "trains" with her. Kay played with him awhile. Then she gave him something to eat. After he ate, she washed his face and hands. Then she got him ready for bed. She held him awhile and began to sing to him. David liked to hear Kay sing. He liked the pretty tune. After a time his eyes began to close. Kay put him to bed.

Kay looked at the newspaper awhile. Then she did her homework. When her homework was finished, she turned on TV. She was watching a show when she heard the baby cry. She hurried to his bed. She picked him up and held him, but he didn't stop crying. His head was hot. He seemed to be sick.

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Author Unknown

Kay looked at the clock. It was a quarter to eight. The Masons had planned to go to the show at eight o'clock. Kay phoned the hotel and asked for the Masons. Mrs. Mason came to the phone.

"David seems to be sick," Kay told her. "His head is hot. He is crying and won't go back to sleep."

"We will come home and see," said Mrs. Mason. "Thank you for phoning."

By eight o'clock the Masons were home. When Mrs. Mason looked at David, she said, "Yes, he seems sick. I knew he had a cold. I think we had better phone the doctor. I am glad you phoned us, Kay. You did the right thing."

Kay was glad she had phoned the Masons. She knew it was her duty to look after the baby. But when he became sick, it was her duty to let his mother and father know.

Story Checkup

Underline the sentences that are true.

1. Mr. and Mrs. Mason went to dinner and a show.
2. David started to cry when Mr. and Mrs. Mason left.
3. Kay played "trains" with David.
4. Kay watched TV after David went to bed.
5. Kay did not hear the baby cry.

Number these sentences in the order in which they happened.

_____ Mrs. Mason showed Kay what to give the baby to eat.

_____ Kay played "trains" with David.

_____ Kay came to the Masons' at five o'clock.

_____ Kay began to sing to David.

_____ The baby began to cry.

_____ Kay got the baby ready for bed.

_____ Kay gave David something to eat.

_____ Kay phoned the Masons at the hotel.

Different Ways Of Writing

1. Draw a picture.

   Example:

2. Pretend to write by scribbling.

   Example:

3. Write letters.

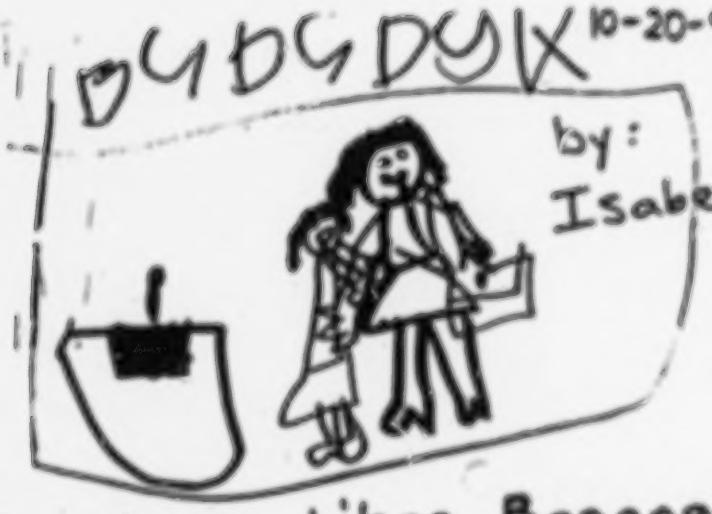
   Example: I B V C

4. What letters do you hear in the words.

   Example: I lk kts

5. Write the sentence correctly to explain the drawing.

   Example: I like cats.



Lucy Likes Bananas

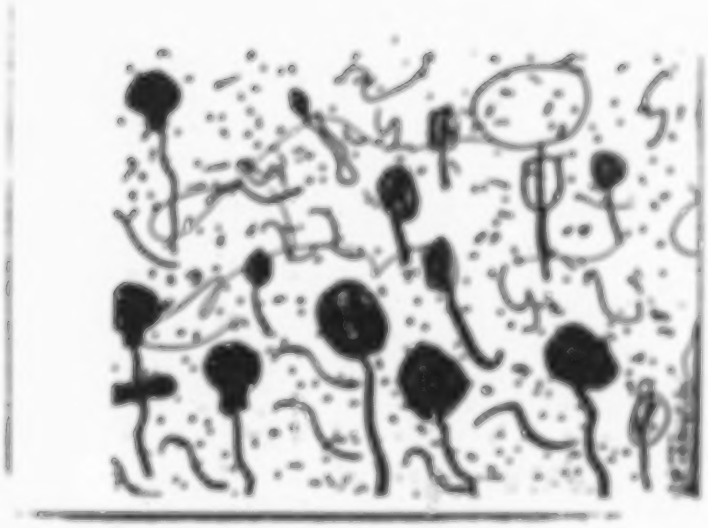
One day a little girl tasted a banana. She loved them.

There was a knock.
She opened the door.
She said, "Hello, my mom is not home."
This is the girl who wanted to come in.

Lucy's mom came home with a bunch of bananas!
ORCHID
These are bananas.

MY Family
by:
Korina
There are 4 people in my family.
Frog
Me

PAT
DAN
PAUL
My brother
I love
myfamil



GAIT welcome
EstebAN WAE
LAN ABC TAS
IS WAt WAWLA
BDMSPRFHAT
JANUARy LOVE
EStebAN LOVE
KARIVA

Appendix Z

Post Writing Sample

Write about a time when you helped someone or someone helped you.